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THE POETICAL WORKS

OF

ROBERT BROWNING,

M. A.,

HONORARY FELLOW OF BALLIOL COLLEGE, OXFORD.

VOL. II.

SORDELLO — PIPPA PASSES.

1

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BIBLIOTHECA
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SORDELLO.

1840.

TO J. MILSAND, OF DIJON.

Dear Friend,—Let the next poem be introduced by your name, therefore remembered along with one of the deepest of my affections, and so repay all trouble it ever cost me. I wrote it twenty-five years ago for only a few, counting even in these on somewhat more care about its subject than they really had. My own faults of expression were many; but with care for a man or book such would be surmounted, and without it what avails the faultlessness of either? I blame nobody, least of all myself, who did my best then and since; for I lately gave time and pains to turn my work into what the many might,—instead of what the few must,—like: but after all, I imagined another thing at first, and therefore leave as I find it. The historical decoration was purposely of no more importance than a background requires; and my stress lay on the incidents in the development of a soul: little else is worth study. I, at least, always thought so—you, with many known and unknown to me, think so—others may one day think so; and whether my attempt remain for them or not, I trust, though away and past it, to continue ever yours,

R. B.

London, June 9, 1863.

BIBLIOTHECA
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MONACENSIS

SORDELLO.

1840.

BOOK THE FIRST.

A QUIXOTIC ATTEMPT.

Who will, may hear Sordello's story told:
His story? Who believes me shall behold
The man, pursue his fortunes to the end,
Like me: for as the friendless-people's friend
Spied from his hill-top once, despite the din
And dust of multitudes, Pentapolin
Named o' the Naked Arm, I single out
Sordello, compassed murkily about
With ravage of six long sad hundred years.
Only believe me. Ye believe?

Appears
Verona . . . Never, I should warn you first,
Of my own choice had this, if not the worst
Yet not the best expedient, served to tell
A story I could body forth so well
By making speak, myself kept out of view,
The very man as he was wont to do,

And leaving you to say the rest for him.
Since, though I might be proud to see the dim
Abysmal past divide its hateful surge,
Letting of all men this one man emerge
Because it pleased me, yet, that moment past,
I should delight in watching first to last
His progress as you watch it, not a whit
More in the secret than yourselves who sit
Fresh-chapleted to listen. But it seems
Your setters-forth of unexampled themes,
Makers of quite new men, producing them,
Would best chalk broadly on each vesture's hem,
The wearer's quality; or take their stand,
Motley on back and pointing-pole in hand,
Beside him. So, for once I face ye, friends,
Summoned together from the world's four ends,
Dropped down from heaven or cast up from hell,
To hear the story I propose to tell.
Confess now, poets know the dragnet's trick,
Catching the dead, if fate denies the quick,
And shaming her; 't is not for fate to choose
Silence or song because she can refuse
Real eyes to glisten more, real hearts to ache
Less oft, real brows turn smoother for our sake:
I have experienced something of her spite;
But there 's a realm wherein she has no right
And I have many lovers. Say, but few
Friends fate accords me? Here they are: now view
The host I muster! Many a lighted face

Foul with no vestige of the grave's disgrace;
What else should tempt them back to taste our air
Except to see how their successors fare?
My audience! and they sit, each ghostly man
Striving to look as living as he can,
Brother by breathing brother; thou art set,
Clear-witted critic, by . . . but I 'll not fret
A wondrous soul of them, nor move death's spleen
Who loves not to unlock them. Friends! I mean
The living in good earnest—ye elect
Chiefly for love—suppose not I reject
Judicious praise, who contrary shall peep,
Some fit occasion, forth, for fear ye sleep,
To glean your bland approvals. Then, appear,
Verona! stay—thou, spirit, come not near
Now—not this time desert thy cloudy place
To scare me, thus employed, with that pure face!
I need not fear this audience, I make free
With them, but then this is no place for thee!
The thunder-phrase of the Athenian, grown
Up out of memories of Marathon,
Would echo like his own sword's griding screech
Braying a Persian shield,—the silver speech
Of Sidney's self, the starry paladin,
Turn intense as a trumpet sounding in
The knights to tilt,—wert thou to hear! What heart
Have I to play my puppets, bear my part
Before these worthies?

Lo, the past is hurled

In twain: up-thrust, out-staggering on the world,
Subsiding into shape, a darkness rears
Its outline, kindles at the core, appears
Verona. 'T is six hundred years and more
Since an event. The Second Friedrich wore
The purple, and the Third Honorius filled
The holy chair. That autumn eve was stilled:
A last remains of sunset dimly burned
O'er the far forests, like a torch-flame turned
By the wind back upon its bearer's hand
In one long flare of crimson; as a brand,
The woods beneath lay black. A single eye
From all Verona cared for the soft sky.
But, gathering in its ancient market-place,
Talked group with restless group; and not a face
But wrath made livid, for among them were
Death's staunch purveyors, such as have in care
To feast him. Fear had long since taken root
In every breast, and now these crushed its fruit,
The ripe hate, like a wine: to note the way
It worked while each grew drunk! Men grave and grey
Stood, with shut eyelids, rocking to and fro,
Letting the silent luxury trickle slow
About the hollows where a heart should be;
But the young gulped with a delirious glee
Some foretaste of their first debauch in blood
At the fierce news: for, be it understood,
Envoys apprised Verona that her prince
Count Richard of Saint Boniface, joined since

A year with Azzo, Este's Lord, to thrust
Taurello Salinguerra, prime in trust
With Ecelin Romano, from his seat
Ferrara,—over zealous in the feat
And stumbling on a peril unaware,
Was captive, trammelled in his proper snare,
They phrase it, taken by his own intrigue.
Immediate succour from the Lombard League
Of fifteen cities that affect the Pope,
For Azzo, therefore, and his fellow-hope
Of the Guelf cause, a glory overcast!
Men's faces, late agape, are now aghast.
"Prone is the purple pavis; Este makes
" Mirth for the devil when he undertakes
" To play the Ecelin; as if it cost
" Merely your pushing-by to gain a post
" Like his! The patron tells ye, once for all,
" There be sound reasons that preferment fall
" On our beloved" . . .
" Duke o' the Rood, why not?"
Shouted an Estian, " grudge ye such a lot?
"The hill-cat boasts some cunning of her own,
" Some stealthy trick to better beasts unknown,
" That quick with prey enough her hunger blunts,
" And feeds her fat while gaunt the lion hunts."
" Taurello," quoth an envoy, " as in wane
" Dwelt at Ferrara. Like an osprey fain
" To fly but forced the earth his couch to make
" Far inland, till his friend the tempest wake,

"Waits he the Kaiser's coming; and as yet
"That fast friend sleeps, and he too sleeps: but let
"Only the billow freshen, and he snuffs
"The aroused hurricane ere it enroughs
"The sea it means to cross because of him.
"Sinketh the breeze? His hope-sick eye grows dim;
"Creep closer on the creature! Every day
"Strengthens the Pontiff; Ecelin, they say,
"Dozes now at Oliero, with dry lips
"Telling upon his perished finger-tips
"How many ancestors are to depose
"Ere he be Satan's Viceroy when the doze
"Deposits him in hell. So, Guelfs rebuilt
"Their houses; not a drop of blood was spilt
"When Cino Bocchimpane chanced to meet
"Buccio Virtù—God's wafer, and the street
"Is narrow! Tutti Santi, think, a-swarm
"With Ghibellins, and yet he took no harm!
"This could not last. Off Salinguerra went
"To Padua, Podestà, 'with pure intent,'
"Said he, 'my presence, judged the single bar
"'To permanent tranquillity, may jar
"'No longer'—so! his back is fairly turned?
"The pair of goodly palaces are burned,
"The gardens ravaged, and our Guelfs laugh, drunk
"A week with joy. The next, their laughter sunk
"In sobs of blood, for they found, some strange way,
"Old Salinguerra back again—I say,
"Old Salinguerra in the town once more

"Uprooting, overturning, flame before,
"Blood fetlock-high beneath him. Azzo fled;
"Who 'scaped the carnage followed; then the dead
"Were pushed aside from Salinguerra's throne,
"He ruled once more Ferrara, all alone.
"Till Azzo, stunned awhile, revived, would pounce
"Coupled with Boniface, like lynx and ounce,
"On the gorged bird. The burghers ground their teeth
"To see troop after troop encamp beneath
"I' the standing corn thick o'er the scanty patch
"It took so many patient months to snatch
"Out of the marsh; while just within their walls
"Men fed on men. At length Taurello calls
"A parley: 'let the Count wind up the war!'
"Richard, light-hearted as a plunging star,
"Agrees to enter for the kindest ends
"Ferrara, flanked with fifty chosen friends,
"No horse-boy more, for fear your timid sort
"Should fly Ferrara at the bare report.
"Quietly through the town they rode, jog-jog;
"'Ten, twenty, thirty,—curse the catalogue
"'Of burnt Guelf houses! Strange, Taurello shows
"'Not the least sign of life'—whereat arose
"A general growl: 'How? With his victors by?
"'I and my Veronese? My troops and I?
"'Receive us, was your word?' So jogged they on,
"Nor laughed their host too openly: once gone
"Into the trap!—"

Six hundred years ago!

Such the time's aspect and peculiar woe
(Yourselves may spell it yet in chronicles,
Albeit the worm, our busy brother, drills
His sprawling path through letters anciently
Made fine and large to suit some abbot's eye)
When the new Hohenstauffen dropped the mask,
Flung John of Brienne's favour from his casque,
Forswore crusading, had no mind to leave
Saint Peter's proxy leisure to retrieve
Losses to Otho and to Barbaross,
Or make the Alps less easy to recross ;
And, thus confirming Pope Honorius' fear,
Was excommunicate that very year.
"The triple-bearded Teuton come to life !"
Groaned the Great League ; and, arming for the strife,
Wide Lombardy, on tiptoe to begin,
Took up, as it was Guelf or Ghibellin,
Its cry ; what cry ?
"The Emperor to come !"
His crowd of feudatories, all and some,
That leapt down with a crash of swords, spears, shields,
One fighter on his fellow, to our fields,
Scattered anon, took station here and there,
And carried it, till now, with little care—
Cannot but cry for him ; how else rebut
Us longer ? Cliffs, an earthquake suffered jut
In the mid-sea, each domineering crest,
Nothing save such another throe can wrest
From out (conceive) a certain chokeweed grown

Since o'er the waters, twine and tangle thrown
Too thick, too fast accumulating round,
Too sure to over-riot and confound
Ere long each brilliant islet with itself
Unless a second shock save shoal and shelf,
Whirling the sea-drift wide: alas, the bruised
And sullen wreck! Sunlight to be diffused
For that! Sunlight, 'neath which, a scum at first,
The million fibres of our chokeweed nurst
Dispread themselves, mantling the troubled main,
And, shattered by those rocks, took hold again,
So kindly blazed it—that same blaze to brood
O'er every cluster of the multitude
Still hazarding new clasps, ties, filaments,
An emulous exchange of pulses, vents
Of nature into nature; till some growth
Unfancied yet, exuberantly clothe
A surface solid now, continuous, one:
"The Pope, for us the People, who begun
"The People, carries on the People thus,
"To keep that Kaiser off and dwell with us!"
See you?

Or say, Two Principles that live
Each fitly by its Representative.
"Hill-cat"—who called him so?—the gracefullest
Adventurer, the ambiguous stranger-guest
Of Lombardy (sleek but that ruffling fur,
Those talons to their sheath!) whose velvet purr
Soothes jealous neighbours when a Saxon scout

—Arpo or Yoland, is it?—one without
A country or a name, presumes to couch
Beside their noblest; until men avouch
That, of all Houses in the Trevisan,
Conrad descries no fitter, rear or van,
Than Ecelo! They laughed as they enrolled
That name at Milan on the page of gold,
Godego's lord,—Ramon, Marostica,
Cartiglion, Bassano, Loria,
And every sheep-cote on the Suabian's fief!
No laughter when his son, "the Lombard Chief"
Forsooth, as Barbarossa's path was bent
To Italy along the Vale of Trent,
Welcomed him at Roncaglia! Sadness now—
The hamlets nested on the Tyrol's brow,
The Asolan and Euganean hills,
The Rhetian and the Julian, sadness fills
Them all, for Ecelin vouchsafes to stay
Among and care about them; day by day
Choosing this pinnacle, the other spot,
A castle building to defend a cot,
A cot built for a castle to defend,
Nothing but castles, castles, nor an end
To boasts how mountain ridge may join with ridge
By sunken gallery and soaring bridge.
He takes, in brief, a figure that beseems
The grisliest nightmare of the Church's dreams,
—A Signory firm-rooted, unestranged
From its old interests, and nowise changed

By its new neighbourhood: perchance the vaunt
Of Otho, "my own Este shall supplant
"Your Este," come to pass. The sire led in
A son as cruel; and this Ecelin
Had sons, in turn, and daughters sly and tall
And curling and compliant; but for all
Romano (so they styled him) throve, that neck
Of his so pinched and white, that hungry cheek
Proved 't was some fiend, not him, the man's-flesh went
To feed: whereas Romano's instrument,
Famous Taurello Salinguerra, sole
I' the world, a tree whose boughs were slipt the bole
Successively, why should not he shed blood
To further a design? Men understood
Living was pleasant to him as he wore
His careless surcoat, glanced some missive o'er,
Propped on his truncheon in the public way,
While his lord lifted writhen hands to pray,
Lost at Oliéro's convent.

Hill-cats, face
Our Azzo, our Guelf-Lion! Why disgrace
A worthiness conspicuous near and far
(Atii at Rome while free and consular,
Este at Padua who repulsed the Hun)
By trumpeting the Church's princely son?
—Styled Patron of Rovigo's Polesine,
Ancona's march, Ferrara's . . . ask, in fine,
Our chronicles, commenced when some old monk
Found it intolerable to be sunk

(Vexed to the quick by his revolting cell)
Quite out of summer while alive and well:
Ended when by his mat the Prior stood,
'Mid busy promptings of the brotherhood,
Striving to coax from his decrepit brains
The reason Father Porphyry took pains
To blot those ten lines out which used to stand
First on their charter drawn by Hildebrand.
The same night wears. Verona's rule of yore
Was vested in a certain Twenty-four;
And while within his palace these debate
Concerning Richard and Ferrara's fate,
Glide we by clapping doors, with sudden glare
Of cressets vented on the dark, nor care
For aught that 's seen or heard until we shut
The smother in, the lights, all noises but
The carroch's booming: safe at last! Why strange
Such a recess should lurk behind a range
Of banquet-rooms? Your finger—thus—you push
A spring, and the wall opens, would you rush
Upon the banqueters, select your prey,
Waiting (the slaughter-weapons in the way
Strewing this very bench) with sharpened ear
A preconcerted signal to appear;
Or if you simply crouch with beating heart,
Bearing in some voluptuous pageant part
To startle them. Nor mutes nor masquers now;
Nor any . . . does that one man sleep whose brow
The dying lamp-flame sinks and rises o'er?

What woman stood beside him? not the more
Is he unfastened from the earnest eyes
Because that arras fell between! Her wise
And lulling words are yet about the room,
Her presence wholly poured upon the gloom
Down even to her vesture's creeping stir.
And so reclines he, saturate with her,
Until an outcry from the square beneath
Pierces the charm: he springs up, glad to breathe,
Above the cunning element, and shakes
The stupor off as (look you) morning breaks
On the gay dress, and, near concealed by it,
The lean frame like a half-burnt taper, lit
Erst at some marriage-feast, then laid away
Till the Armenian bridegroom's dying day,
In his wool wedding-robe.

For he—for he,
Gate-vein of this hearts' blood of Lombardy,
(If I should falter now)—for he is thine!
Sordello, thy forerunner, Florentine!
A herald-star I know thou didst absorb
Relentless into the consummate orb
That scared it from its right to roll along
A sempiternal path with dance and song
Fulfilling its allotted period,
Serenest of the progeny of God—
Who yet resigns it not! His darling stoops
With no quenched lights, desponds with no blank troops
Of disenfranchised brilliances, for, blent

Utterly with thee, its shy element
Like thine upburneth prosperous and clear.
Still, what if I approach the august sphere
Named now with only one name, disentwine
That under-current soft and argentine
From its fierce mate in the majestic mass
Leavëned as the sea whose fire was mixt with glass
In John's transcendent vision,—launch once more
That lustre? Dante, pacer of the shore,
Where glutted hell disgorgeth filthiest gloom,
Unbitten by its whirring sulphur-spume—
Or whence the grieved and obscure waters slope
Into a darkness quieted by hope;
Plucker of amaranths grown beneath God's eye
In gracious twilights where his chosen lie,
I would do this! If I should falter now!
  In Mantua territory half is slough,
Half pine-tree forest; maples, scarlet-oaks
Breed o'er the river-beds; even Mincio chokes
With sand the summer through: but 't is morass
In winter up to Mantua walls. There was,
Some thirty years before this evening's coil,
One spot reclaimed from the surrounding spoil,
Goito; just a castle built amid
A few low mountains; firs and larches hid
Their main defiles, and rings of vineyard bound
The rest. Some captured creature in a pound,
Whose artless wonder quite precludes distress,
Secure beside in its own loveliness,

So peered with airy head, below, above,
The castle at its toils, the lapwings love
To glean among at grape-time. Pass within.
A maze of corridors contrived for sin,
Dusk winding-stairs, dim galleries got past,
You gain the inmost chambers, gain at last
A maple-panelled room: that haze which seems
Floating about the panel, if there gleams
A sunbeam over it, will turn to gold
And in light-graven characters unfold
The Arab's wisdom everywhere; what shade
Marred them a moment, those slim pillars made,
Cut like a company of palms to prop
The roof, each kissing top entwined with top,
Leaning together; in the carver's mind
Some knot of bacchanals, flushed cheek combined
With straining forehead, shoulders purpled, hair
Diffused between, who in a goat-skin bear
A vintage; graceful sister-palms! But quick
To the main wonder, now. A vault, see; thick
Black shade about the ceiling, though fine slits
Across the buttress suffer light by fits
Upon a marvel in the midst. Nay, stoop—
A dullish grey-streaked cumbrous font, a group
Round it,—each side of it, where'er one sees,—
Upholds it; shrinking Caryatides
Of just-tinged marble like Eve's lilied flesh
Beneath her maker's finger when the fresh
First pulse of life shot brightening the snow.

The font's edge burthens every shoulder, so
They muse upon the ground, eyelids half closed;
Some, with meek arms behind their backs disposed,
Some, crossed above their bosoms, some, to veil
Their eyes, some, propping chin and cheek so pale,
Some, hanging slack an utter helpless length
Dead as a buried vestal whose whole strength
Goes when the grate above shuts heavily.
So dwell these noiseless girls, patient to see,
Like priestesses because of sin impure
Penanced for ever, who resigned endure,
Having that once drunk sweetness to the dregs.
And every eve, Sordello's visit begs
Pardon for them: constant as eve he came
To sit beside each in her turn, the same
As one of them, a certain space: and awe
Made a great indistinctness till he saw
Sunset slant cheerful through the buttress-chinks,
Gold seven times globed; surely our maiden shrinks
And a smile stirs her as if one faint grain
Her load were lightened, one shade less the stain
Obscured her forehead, yet one more bead slipt
From off the rosary whereby the crypt
Keeps count of the contritions of its charge?
Then with a step more light, a heart more large,
He may depart, leave her and every one
To linger out the penance in mute stone.
Ah, but Sordello? 'T is the tale I mean
To tell you.

In this castle may be seen,
On the hill tops, or underneath the vines,
Or eastward by the mound of firs and pines
That shuts out Mantua, still in loneliness,
A slender boy in a loose page's dress,
Sordello: do but look on him awhile
Watching ('t is autumn) with an earnest smile
The noisy flock of thievish birds at work
Among the yellowing vineyards; see him lurk
('T is winter with its sullenest of storms)
Beside that arras-length of broidered forms,
On tiptoe, lifting in both hands a light
Which makes yon warrior's visage flutter bright
—Ecelo, dismal father of the brood,
And Ecelin, close to the girl he wooed,
Auria, and their Child, with all his wives
From Agnes to the Tuscan that survives,
Lady of the castle, Adelaide. His face
—Look, now he turns away! Yourselves shall trace
(The delicate nostril swerving wide and fine,
A sharp and restless lip, so well combine
With that calm brow) a soul fit to receive
Delight at every sense; you can believe
Sordello foremost in the regal class
Nature has broadly severed from her mass
Of men, and framed for pleasure, as she frames
Some happy lands, that have luxurious names,
For loose fertility; a footfall there
Suffices to upturn to the warm air

Half-germinating spices; mere decay
Produces richer life; and day by day
New pollen on the lily-petal grows,
And still more labyrinthine buds the rose.
You recognise at once the finer dress
Of flesh that amply lets in loveliness
At eye and ear, while round the rest is furled
(As though she would not trust them with her world)
A veil that shows a sky not near so blue,
And lets but half the sun look fervid through.
How can such love?—like souls on each full-fraught
Discovery brooding, blind at first to aught
Beyond its beauty, till exceeding love
Becomes an aching weight; and, to remove
A curse that haunts such natures—to preclude
Their finding out themselves can work no good
To what they love nor make it very blest
By their endeavour,—they are fain invest
The lifeless thing with life from their own soul,
Availing it to purpose, to control,
To dwell distinct and have peculiar joy
And separate interests that may employ
That beauty fitly, for its proper sake.
Nor rest they here; fresh births of beauty wake
Fresh homage, every grade of love is past,
With every mode of loveliness: then cast
Inferior idols off their borrowed crown
Before a coming glory. Up and down
Runs arrowy fire, while earthly forms combine

To throb the secret forth; a touch divine—
And the scaled eyeball owns the mystic rod;
Visibly through his garden walketh God.
So fare they. Now revert. One character
Denotes them through the progress and the stir,—
A need to blend with each eternal charm,
Bury themselves, the whole heart wide and warm,—
In something not themselves; they would belong
To what they worship—stronger and more strong
Thus prodigally fed—which gathers shape
And feature, soon imprisons past escape
The votary framed to love and to submit
Nor ask, as passionate he kneels to it,
Whence grew the idol's empery. So runs
A legend; light had birth ere moons and suns,
Flowing through space a river and alone,
Till chaos burst and blank the spheres were strown
Hither and thither, foundering and blind:
When into each of them rushed light—to find
Itself no place, foiled of its radiant chance.
Let such forego their just inheritance!
For there 's a class that eagerly looks, too,
On beauty, but, unlike the gentler crew,
Proclaims each new revealment born a twin
With a distinctest consciousness within
Referring still the quality, now first
Revealed, to their own soul—its instinct nursed
In silence, now remembered better, shown
More thoroughly, but not the less their own;

A dream come true; the special exercise
Of any special function that implies
The being fair, or good, or wise, or strong,
Dormant within their nature all along—
Whose fault? So homage, other souls direct
Without, turns inward. "How should this deject
"Thee, soul?" they murmur; "wherefore strength be quelled
"Because, its trivial accidents withheld,
"Organs are missed that clog the world, inert,
"Wanting a will, to quicken and exert,
"Like thine—existence cannot satiate,
"Cannot surprise? Laugh thou at envious fate,
"Who, from earth's simplest combination stampt
"With individuality—uncrampt
"By living its faint elemental life,
"Dost soar to heaven's complext essence, rife
"With grandeurs, unaffronted to the last,
"Equal to being all!"
In truth? Thou hast
Life, then—wilt challenge life for us: our race
Is vindicated so, obtains its place
In thy ascent, the first of us; whom we
May follow, to the meanest, finally,
With our more bounded wills?
Ah, but to find
A certain mood enervate such a mind,
Counsel it slumber in the solitude
Thus reached nor, stooping, task for mankind's good

Its nature just as life and time accord
" —Too narrow an arena to reward
" Emprize—the world's occasion worthless since
" Not absolutely fitted to evince
" Its mastery !" Or if yet worse befall,
And a desire possess it to put all
That nature forth, forcing our straitened sphere
Contain it,—to display completely here
The mastery another life should learn,
Thrusting in time eternity's concern,—
So that Sordello . . .

Fool, who spied the mark
Of leprosy upon him, violet-dark
Already as he loiters? Born just now,
With the new century, beside the glow
And efflorescence out of barbarism ;
Witness a Greek or two from the abysm
That stray through Florence-town with studious air,
Calming the chisel of that Pisan pair :
If Nicolo should carve a Christus yet !
While at Siena is Guidone set,
Forehead on hand ; a painful birth must be
Matured ere Saint Eufemia's sacristy
Or transept gather fruits of one great gaze
At the moon : look you ! The same orange haze,—
The same blue stripe round that—and, i' the midst,
Thy spectral whiteness, Mother-maid, who didst
Pursue the dizzy painter !

Woe, then, worth

Any officious babble letting forth
The leprosy confirmed and ruinous
To spirit lodged in a contracted house!
Go back to the beginning, rather; blend
It gently with Sordello's life; the end
Is piteous, you may see, but much between
Pleasant enough. Meantime, some pyx to screen
The full-grown pest, some lid to shut upon
The goblin! So they found at Babylon,
(Colleagues, mad Lucius and sage Antonine)
Sacking the city, by Apollo's shrine,
In rummaging among the rarities,
A certain coffer; he who made the prize
Opened it greedily; and out there curled
Just such another plague, for half the world
Was stung. Crawl in then, hag, and couch asquat,
Keeping that blotchy bosom thick in spot
Until your time is ripe! The coffer-lid
Is fastened, and the coffer safely hid
Under the Loxian's choicest gifts of gold.

Who will may hear Sordello's story told,
And how he never could remember when
He dwelt not at Goito. Calmly, then,
About this secret lodge of Adelaide's
Glided his youth away; beyond the glades
On the fir-forest border, and the rim
Of the low range of mountain, was for him
No other world: but this appeared his own
To wander through at pleasure and alone.

The castle too seemed empty; far and wide
Might he disport; only the northern side
Lay under a mysterious interdict—
Slight, just enough remembered to restrict
His roaming to the corridors, the vault
Where those font-bearers expiate their fault,
The maple-chamber, and the little nooks
And nests, and breezy parapet that looks
Over the woods to Mantua: there he strolled.
Some foreign women-servants, very old,
Tended and crept about him—all his clue
To the world's business and embroiled ado
Distant a dozen hill-tops at the most.
And first a simple sense of life engrossed
Sordello in his drowsy Paradise;
The day's adventures for the day suffice—
Its constant tribute of perceptions strange,
With sleep and stir in healthy interchange,
Suffice, and leave him for the next at ease
Like the great palmer-worm that strips the trees,
Eats the life out of every luscious plant,
And, when September finds them sere or scant,
Puts forth two wondrous winglets, alters quite,
And hies him after unforeseen delight.
So fed Sordello, not a shard disheathed;
As ever, round each new discovery, wreathed
Luxuriantly the fancies infantine,
His admiration, bent on making fine
Its novel friend at any risk, would fling

In gay profusion forth: a ficklest king,
Confessed those minions !—eager to dispense
So much from his own stock of thought and sense
As might enable each to stand alone
And serve him for a fellow ; with his own,
Joining the qualities that just before
Had graced some older favourite. Thus they wore
A fluctuating halo, yesterday
Set flicker and to-morrow filched away,—
Those upland objects each of separate name,
Each with an aspect never twice the same,
Waxing and waning as the new-born host
Of fancies, like a single night's hoar-frost,
Gave to familiar things a face grotesque ;
Only, preserving through the mad burlesque
A grave regard. Conceive ! the orpine patch
Blossoming earliest on the log-house-thatch
The day those archers wound along the vines—
Related to the Chief that left their lines
To climb with clinking step the northern stair
Up to the solitary chambers where
Sordello never came. Thus thrall reached thrall ;
He o'er-festooning every interval,
As the adventurous spider, making light
Of distance, shoots her threads from depth to height,
From barbican to battlement : so flung
Fantasies forth and in their centre swung
Our architect,—the breezy morning fresh
Above, and merry,—all his waving mesh

Laughing with lucid dew-drops rainbow-edged.
This world of ours by tacit pact is pledged
To laying such a spangled fabric low
Whether by gradual brush or gallant blow.
But its abundant will was baulked here: doubt
Rose tardily in one so fenced about
From most that nurtures judgment, care and pain:
Judgment, that dull expedient we are fain,
Less favoured, to adopt betimes and force
Stead us, diverted from our natural course
Of joys—contrive some yet amid the dearth,
Vary and render them, it may be, worth
Most we forego. Suppose Sordello hence
Selfish enough, without a moral sense
However feeble; what informed the boy
Others desired a portion in his joy?
Or say a ruthful chance broke woof and warp—
A heron's nest beat down by March winds sharp,
A fawn breathless beneath the precipice,
A bird with unsoiled breast and filmless eyes
Warm in the brake—could these undo the trance
Lapping Sordello? Not a circumstance
That makes for you, friend Naddo! Eat fern-seed
And peer beside us and report indeed
If (your word) "genius" dawned with throes and
stings
And the whole fiery catalogue, while springs
Summers and winters quietly came and went.
Time put at length that period to content,

By right the world should have imposed: bereft
Of its good offices, Sordello, left
To study his companions, managed rip
Their fringe off, learn the true relationship,
Core with its crust, their nature with his own:
Amid his wild-wood sights he lived alone.
As if the poppy felt with him! Though he
Partook the poppy's red effrontery
Till Autumn spoiled their fleering quite with rain,
And, turbanless, a coarse brown rattling crane
Lay bare. That's gone: yet why renounce, for that,
His disenchanted tributaries—flat
Perhaps, but scarce so utterly forlorn,
Their simple presence might not well be borne
Whose parley was a transport once: recall
The poppy's gifts, it flaunts you, after all,
A poppy:—why distrust the evidence
Of each soon satisfied and healthy sense?
The new-born judgment answered, "little boots
"Beholding other creatures' attributes
"And having none!" or, say that it sufficed,
"Yet, could one but possess, oneself," (enticed
Judgment) "some special office!" Nought beside
Serves you? "Well then, be somehow justified
"For this ignoble wish to circumscribe
"And concentrate, rather than swell, the tribe
"Of actual pleasures: what, now, from without
"Effects it?—proves, despite a lurking doubt,
"Mere sympathy sufficient, trouble spared?

"That, tasting joys by proxy thus, you fared
"The better for them?" Thus much craved his soul.
Alas, from the beginning love is whole
And true; if sure of nought beside, most sure
Of its own truth at least; nor may endure
A crowd to see its face, that cannot know
How hot the pulses throb its heart below.
While its own helplessness and utter want
Of means to worthily be ministrant
To what it worships, do but fan the more
Its flame, exalt the idol far before
Itself as it would have it ever be.
Souls like Sordello, on the contrary,
Coerced and put to shame, retaining will,
Care little, take mysterious comfort still,
But look forth tremblingly to ascertain
If others judge their claims not urged in vain,
And say for them their stifled thoughts aloud.
So, they must ever live before a crowd:
—"Vanity," Naddo tells you.
Whence contrive
A crowd, now? From these women just alive,
That archer-troop? Forth glided—not alone
Each painted warrior, every girl of stone,
Nor Adelaide (bent double o'er a scroll,
One maiden at her knees, that eve, his soul
Shook as he stumbled through the arras'd glooms
On them, for, 'mid quaint robes and weird perfumes,
Started the meagre Tuscan up,—her eyes,

The maiden's, also, bluer with surprise)
—But the entire out-world: whatever, scraps
And snatches, song and story, dreams perhaps,
Conceited the world's offices, and he
Had hitherto transferred to flower or tree,
Nor counted a befitting heritage
Each, of its own right, singly to engage
Some man, no other,—such now dared to stand
Alone. Strength, wisdom, grace on every hand
Soon disengaged themselves, and he discerned
A sort of human life: at least, was turned
A stream of lifelike figures through his brain.
Lord, liegeman, valvassor and suzerain,
Ere he could choose, surrounded him; a stuff
To work his pleasure on; there, sure enough:
But as for gazing, what shall fix that gaze?
Are they to simply testify the ways
He who convoked them sends his soul along
With the cloud's thunder or a dove's brood-song?
—While they live each his life, boast each his own
Peculiar dower of bliss, stand each alone
In some one point where something dearest loved
Is easiest gained—far worthier to be proved
Than aught he envies in the forest-wights!
No simple and self-evident delights,
But mixed desires of unimagined range,
Contrasts or combinations, new and strange,
Irksome perhaps, yet plainly recognised
By this, the sudden company—loves prized

By those who are to prize his own amount
Of loves. Once care because such make account,
Allow a foreign recognition stamp
The current value, and his crowd shall vamp
Him counterfeits enough; and so their print
Be on the piece, 't is gold, attests the mint,
And "good," pronounce they whom his new appeal
Is made to: if their casual print conceal—
This arbitrary good of theirs o'ergloss
What he have lived without, nor felt the loss—
Qualities strange, ungainly, wearisome,
—What matter? So must speech expand the dumb
Part-sigh, part-smile with which Sordello, late
No foolish woodland-sights could satiate,
Betakes himself to study hungrily
Just what the puppets his crude fantasy
Supposes notablest, popes, kings, priests, knights,
May please to promulgate for appetites;
Accepting all their artificial joys
Not as he views them, but as he employs
Each shape to estimate the other's stock
Of attributes, that on a marshalled flock
Of authorized enjoyments he may spend
Himself, be men, now, as he used to blend
With tree and flower—nay more entirely, else
'T were mockery: for instance, "how excels
"My life that chieftain's?" (who apprised the youth
Ecelin, here, becomes this month, in truth,
Imperial Vicar?) "Turns he in his tent

"Remissly? Be it so—my head is bent
"Deliciously amid my girls to sleep.
"What if he stalks the Trentine-pass? Yon steep
"I climbed an hour ago with little toil:
"We are alike there. But can I, too, foil
"The Guelf's paid stabber, carelessly afford
"Saint Mark's a spectacle, the sleight o' the sword
"Baffling the treason in a moment?" Here
No rescue! Poppy he is none, but peer
To Ecelin, assuredly: his hand,
Fashioned no otherwise, should wield a brand
With Ecelin's success—try, now! He soon
Was satisfied, returned as to the moon
From earth; left each abortive boy's-attempt
For feats, from failure happily exempt,
In fancy at his beck. "One day I will
"Accomplish it! Are they not older still
"—Not grown up men and women? 'T is beside
"Only a dream; and though I must abide
"With dreams now, I may find a thorough vent
"For all myself, acquire an instrument
"For acting what these people act; my soul,
"Hunting a body out, may gain its whole
"Desire some day!" How else express chagrin
And resignation, show the hope steal in
With which he let sink from an aching wrist
The rough-hewn ash-bow? Straight, a gold shaft hissed
Into the Syrian air, struck Malek down
Superbly! "Crosses to the breach! God's Town

"Is gained him back!" Why bend rough ash-bows more?
Thus lives he: if not careless as before,
Comforted: for one may anticipate,
Rehearse the future, be prepared when fate
Shall have prepared in turn real men whose names
Startle, real places of enormous fames,
Este abroad and Ecelin at home
To worship him,—Mantua, Verona, Rome
To witness it. Who grudges time so spent?
Rather test qualities to heart's content—
Summon them, thrice selected, near and far—
Compress the starriest into one star,
And grasp the whole at once!

The pageant thinned
Accordingly; from rank to rank, like wind
His spirit passed to winnow and divide;
Back fell the simpler phantasms; every side
The strong clave to the wise; with either classed
The beauteous; so, till two or three amassed
Mankind's beseemingnesses, and reduced
Themselves eventually, graces loosed,
And lavished strengths, to heighten up One Shape
Whose potency no creature should escape.
Can it be Friedrich of the bowmen's talk?
Surely that grape-juice, bubbling at the stalk,
Is some grey scorching Saracenic wine
The Kaiser quaffs with the Miramoline—
Those swarthy hazel-clusters, seamed and chapped,
Or filberts russet-sheathed and velvet-capped,

Are dates plucked from the bough John Brienne sent,
To keep in mind his sluggish armament
Of Canaan :—Friedrich's, all the pomp and fierce
Demeanour ! But harsh sounds and sights transpierce
So rarely the serene cloud where he dwells,
Whose looks enjoin, whose lightest words are spells
On the obdurate ! That right arm indeed
Has thunder for its slave ; but where 's the need
Of thunder if the stricken multitude
Hearkens, arrested in its angriest mood,
While songs go up exulting, then dispread,
Dispart, disperse, lingering overhead
Like an escape of angels ? 'T is the tune,
Nor much unlike the words the women croon
Smilingly, colourless and faint-designed
Each, as a worn-out queen's face some remind
Of her extreme youth's love-tales. " Eglamor
" Made that ! " Half minstrel and half emperor,
What but ill objects vexed him ? Such he slew.
The kinder sort were easy to subdue
By those ambrosial glances, dulcet tones ;
And these a gracious hand advanced to thrones
Beneath him. Wherefore twist and torture this,
Striving to name afresh the antique bliss,
Instead of saying, neither less nor more,
He had discovered, as our world before,
Apollo ? That shall be the name ; nor bid
Me rag by rag expose how patchwork hid
The youth—what thefts of every clime and day

Contributed to purfle the array
He climbed with (June at deep) some close ravine
'Mid clatter of its million pebbles sheen,
Over which, singing soft, the runnel slipped
Elate with rains: into whose streamlet dipped
He foot, yet trod, you thought, with unwet sock—
Though really on the stubs of living rock
Ages ago it crenneled; vines for roof,
Lindens for wall; before him, aye aloof,
Flittered in the cool some azure damsel-fly,
Born of the simmering quiet, there to die.
Emerging whence, Apollo still, he spied
Mighty descents of forest; multiplied
Tuft on tuft, here, the frolic myrtle-trees,
There gendered the grave maple stocks at ease.
And, proud of its observer, straight the wood
Tried old surprises on him; black it stood
A sudden barrier ('t was a cloud passed o'er)
So dead and dense, the tiniest brute no more
Must pass; yet presently (the cloud dispatched)
Each clump, behold, was glistering detached
A shrub, oak-boles shrunk into ilex-stems!
Yet could not he denounce the stratagems
He saw thro', till, hours thence, aloft would hang
White summer-lightnings; as it sank and sprang
To measure, that whole palpitating breast
Of heaven, 't was Apollo, nature prest
At eve to worship.

Time stole: by degrees

The Pythons perish off; his votaries
Sink to respectful distance; songs redeem
Their pains, but briefer; their dismissals seem
Emphatic; only girls are very slow
To disappear—his Delians! Some that glow
O' the instant, more with earlier loves to wrench
Away, reserves to quell, disdains to quench;
Alike in one material circumstance—
All soon or late adore Apollo! Glance
The bevy through, divine Apollo's choice,
His Daphne! "We secure Count Richard's voice
" In Este's counsels, good for Este's ends
" As our Taurello," say his faded friends,
" By granting him our Palma!"—the sole child,
They mean, of Agnes Este who beguiled
Ecelin, years before this Adelaide
Wedded and turned him wicked: "but the maid
" Rejects his suit," those sleepy women boast.
She, scorning all beside, deserves the most
Sordello: so, conspicuous in his world
Of dreams sat Palma. How the tresses curled
Into a sumptuous swell of gold and wound
About her like a glory! even the ground
Was bright as with spilt sunbeams; breathe not, breathe
Not!—poised, see, one leg doubled underneath,
Its small foot buried in the dimpling snow,
Rests, but the other, listlessly below,
O'er the couch-side swings feeling for cool air,
The vein-streaks swollen a richer violet where

The languid blood lies heavily; yet calm
On her slight prop, each flat and outspread palm,
As but suspended in the act to rise
By consciousness of beauty, whence her eyes
Turn with so frank a triumph, for she meets
Apollo's gaze in the pine glooms.
Time fleets:
That 's worst! Because the pre-appointed age
Approaches. Fate is tardy with the stage
And crowd she promised. Lean he grows and pale,
Though restlessly at rest. Hardly avail
Fancies to soothe him. Time steals, yet alone
He tarries here! The earnest smile is gone.
How long this might continue matters not;
—For ever, possibly; since to the spot
None come: our lingering Taurello quits
Mantua at last, and light our lady flits
Back to her place disburthened of a care.
Strange—to be constant here if he is there!
Is it distrust? Oh, never! for they both
Goad Ecelin alike, Romano's growth
Is daily manifest, and Azzo 's dumb
And Richard wavers: let but Friedrich come,
Find matter for the minstrelsy's report!
—Lured from the Isle and its young Kaiser's court
To sing us a Messina morning up,
And, double rillet of a drinking cup,
Sparkle along to ease the land of drouth,
Northward to Provence that, and thus far south

The other. What a method to apprise
Neighbours of births, espousals, obsequies !
Which in their very tongue the Troubadour
Records ; and his performance makes a tour,
For Trouveres bear the miracle about,
Explain its cunning to the vulgar rout,
Until the Formidable House is famed
Over the country—as Taurello aimed,
Who introduced, although the rest adopt,
The novelty. Such games, her absence stopped,
Begin afresh, now Adelaide, recluse
No longer, in the light of day pursues
Her plans at Mantua : whence an accident
Which, breaking on Sordello's mixed content,
Opened, like any flash that cures the blind,
The veritable business of mankind.

the return of Adelaide to the castle demands the services of the troubadours : Sordello's chance lies this way. nicht im Inhaltsplan

BOOK THE SECOND.

THIS BUBBLE OF FANCY,

THE woods were long austere with snow: at last
Pink leaflets budded on the beech, and fast
Larches, scattered through pine-tree solitudes,
Brightened, "as in the slumbrous heart o' the woods
"Our buried year, a witch, grew young again
"To placid incantations, and that stain
"About were from her cauldron, green smoke blent
"With those black pines"—so Eglamor gave vent
To a chance fancy. Whence a just rebuke
From his companion; brother Naddo shook
The solemnest of brows; "Beware," he said,
"Of setting up conceits in nature's stead!"
Forth wandered our Sordello. Nought so sure
As that to-day's adventure will secure
Palma, the visioned lady—only pass
O'er yon damp mound and its exhausted grass,
Under that brake where sundawn feeds the stalks
Of withered fern with gold, into those walks
Of pine and take her! Buoyantly he went.
Again his stooping forehead was besprent
With dew-drops from the skirting ferns. Then wide
Opened the great morass, shot every side
With flashing water through and through; a-shine,

Thick-steaming, all alive. Whose shape divine,
Quivered i' the farthest rainbow-vapour, glanced
Athwart the flying herons? He advanced,
But warily; though Mincio leaped no more,
Each foot-fall burst up in the marish-floor
A diamond jet: and if he stopped to pick
Rose-lichen, or molest the leeches quick,
And circling blood-worms, minnow, newt or loach,
A sudden pond would silently encroach
This way and that. On Palma passed. The verge
Of a new wood was gained. She will emerge
Flushed, now, and panting,—crowds to see,—will own
She loves him—Boniface to hear, to groan,
To leave his suit! One screen of pine-trees still
Opposes: but—the startling spectacle—
Mantua, this time! Under the walls—a crowd
Indeed, real men and women, gay and loud
Round a pavilion. How he stood!

In truth
No prophecy had come to pass: his youth
In its prime now—and where was homage poured
Upon Sordello?—born to be adored,
And suddenly discovered weak, scarce made
To cope with any, cast into the shade
By this and this. Yet something seemed to prick
And tingle in his blood; a sleight—a trick—
And much would be explained. It went for nought—
The best of their endowments were ill bought
With his identity: nay, the conceit,

That this day's roving led to Palma's feet
Was not so vain—list! The word, "Palma!" Steal
Aside, and die, Sordello; this is real,
And this—abjure!
What next? The curtains see
Dividing! She is there; and presently
He will be there—the proper You, at length—
In your own cherished dress of grace and strength:
Most like, the very Boniface!
Not so.
It was a showy man advanced; but though
A glad cry welcomed him, then every sound
Sank and the crowd disposed themselves around,
—"This is not he," Sordello felt; while, "Place
"For the best Troubadour of Boniface!"
Hollaed the Jongleurs,—"Eglamor, whose lay
"Concludes his patron's Court of Love to-day!"
Obsequious Naddo strung the master's lute
With the new lute-string, "Elys," named to suit
The song: he stealthily at watch, the while,
Biting his lip to keep down a great smile
Of pride: then up he struck. Sordello's brain
Swam; for he knew a sometime deed again;
So, could supply each foolish gap and chasm
The minstrel left in his enthusiasm,
Mistaking its true version—was the tale
Not of Apollo? Only, what avail
Luring her down, that Elys, an he pleased,
If the man dared no further? Has he ceased?

And, lo, the people's frank applause half done,
Sordello was beside him, had begun
(Spite of indignant twitchings from his friend
The Trouvere) the true lay with the true end,
Taking the other's names and time and place
For his. On flew the song, a giddy race,
After the flying story; word made leap
Out word, rhyme—rhyme; the lay could barely keep
Pace with the action visibly rushing past:
Both ended. Back fell Naddo more aghast
Than some Egyptian from the harassed bull
That wheeled abrupt and, bellowing, fronted full
His plague, who spied a scarab 'neath the tongue,
And found 't was Apis' flank his hasty prong
Insulted. But the people—but the cries,
The crowding round, and proffering the prize!
—For he had gained some prize. He seemed to shrink
Into a sleepy cloud, just at whose brink
One sight withheld him. There sat Adelaide,
Silent; but at her knees the very maid
Of the North Chamber, her red lips as rich,
The same pure fleecy hair; one weft of which,
Golden and great, quite touched his cheek as o'er
She leant, speaking some six words and no more.
He answered something, anything; and she
Unbound a scarf and laid it heavily
Upon him, her neck's warmth and all. Again
Moved the arrested magic; in his brain
Noises grew, and a light that turned to glare,

And greater glare, until the intense flare
Engulfed him, shut the whole scene from his sense.
And when he woke 't was many a furlong thence,
At home; the sun shining his ruddy wont;
The customary birds'-chirp; but his front
Was crowned—was crowned! Her scented scarf around
His neck! Whose gorgeous vesture heaps the ground?
A prize? He turned, and peeringly on him
Brooded the women-faces, kind and dim,
Ready to talk.—"The Jongleurs in a troop
"Had brought him back, Naddo and Squarcialupe
"And Tagliafer; how strange! a childhood spent
"In taking, well for him, so brave a bent!
"Since Eglamor," they heard, "was dead with spite,
"And Palma chose him for her minstrel."

Light

Sordello rose—to think, now; hitherto
He had perceived. Sure, a discovery grew
Out of it all! Best live from first to last
The transport o'er again. A week he passed,
Sucking the sweet out of each circumstance,
From the bard's outbreak to the luscious trance
Bounding his own achievement. Strange! A man
Recounted an adventure, but began
Imperfectly; his own task was to fill
The frame-work up, sing well what he sung ill,
Supply the necessary points, set loose
As many incidents of little use
—More imbecile the other, not to see

Their relative importance clear as he!
But, for a special pleasure in the act
Of singing—had he ever turned, in fact,
From Elys, to sing Elys?—from each fit
Of rapture to contrive a song of it?
True, this snatch or the other seemed to wind
Into a treasure, helped himself to find
A beauty in himself; for, see, he soared
By means of that mere snatch, to many a hoard
Of fancies; as some falling cone bears soft
The eye along the fir-tree-spire, aloft
To a dove's nest. Then, how divine the cause,
Such a performance might exact applause
From men, if they had fancies too? Could fate
Decree they found a beauty separate
In the poor snatch itself?—"Take Elys, there,
" —' Her head that 's sharp and perfect like a pear,
" ' So close and smooth are laid the few fine locks
" ' Coloured like honey oozed from topmost rocks
" ' Sun-blanched the livelong summer '—if they heard
" Just those two rhymes, assented at my word,
" And loved them as I love them who have run
" These fingers through those pale locks, let the sun
" Into the white cool skin—who first could clutch,
" Then praise—I needs must be a god to such.
" Or if some few, above themselves, and yet
" Beneath me, like their Eglamor, have set
" An impress on our gift? So, men believe
" And worship what they know not, nor receive

" Delight from. Have they fancies—slow, perchance,
" Not at their beck, which indistinctly glance
" Until, by song, each floating part be linked
" To each, and all grow palpable, distinct ? "
He pondered this.

Meanwhile, sounds low and drear
Stole on him, and a noise of footsteps, near
And nearer, and the underwood was pushed
Aside, the larches grazed, the dead leaves crushed
At the approach of men. The wind seemed laid ;
Only, the trees shrunk slightly and a shade
Came o'er the sky although 't was midday yet :
You saw each half-shut downcast floweret
Flutter—" a Roman bride, when they 'd dispart
" Her unbound tresses with the Sabine dart,
" Holding that famous rape in memory still,
" Felt creep into her curls the iron chill,
" And looked thus," Eglamor would say—indeed
'T is Eglamor, no other, these precede
Home hither in the woods. " 'T were surely sweet
" Far from the scene of one's forlorn defeat
" To sleep ! " judged Naddo, who in person led
Jongleurs and Trouveres, chanting at their head,
A scanty company ; for, sooth to say,
Our beaten Troubadour had seen his day.
Old worshippers were something shamed, old friends
Nigh weary ; still the death proposed amends.
" Let us but get them safely through my song
" And home again ! " quoth Naddo.

All along,
This man (they rest the bier upon the sand)
—This calm corpse with the loose flowers in his hand,
Eglamor, lived Sordello's opposite.
For him indeed was Naddo's notion right,
And verse a temple-worship vague and vast,
A ceremony that withdrew the last
Opposing bolt, looped back the lingering veil
Which hid the holy place: should one so frail
Stand there without such effort? or repine
That much was blank, uncertain at the shrine
He knelt before, till, soothed by many a rite,
The power responded, and some sound or sight
Grew up, his own forever, to be fixed
In rhyme, the beautiful, forever!—mixed
With his own life, unloosed when he should please,
Having it safe at hand, ready to ease
All pain, remove all trouble; every time
He loosed that fancy from its bonds of rhyme,
(Like Perseus when he loosed his naked love)
Faltering; so distinct and far above
Himself, these fancies! He, no genius rare,
Transfiguring in fire or wave or air
At will, but a poor gnome that, cloistered up
In some rock-chamber with his agate cup,
His topaz rod, his seed-pearl, in these few
And their arrangement finds enough to do
For his best art. Then, how he loved that art!
The calling marking him a man apart

From men—one not to care, take counsel for
Cold hearts, comfortless faces—(Eglamor
Was neediest of his tribe)—since verse, the gift,
Was his, and men, the whole of them, must shift
Without it, e'en content themselves with wealth
And pomp and power, snatching a life by stealth.
So, Eglamor was not without his pride!
The sorriest bat which cowers through noontide
While other birds are jocund, has one time
When moon and stars are blinded, and the prime
Of earth is his to claim, nor find a peer;
And Eglamor was noblest poet here—
He knew that, 'mid the April woods, he cast
Conceits upon in plenty as he passed,
That Naddo might suppose him not to think
Entirely on the coming triumph: wink
At the one weakness! 'T was a fervid child,
That song of his; no brother of the guild
Had e'er conceived its like. The rest you know,
The exaltation and the overthrow:
Our poet lost his purpose, lost his rank,
His life—to that it came. Yet envy sank
Within him, as he heard Sordello out,
And, for the first time, shouted—tried to shout
Like others, not from any zeal to show
Pleasure that way: the common sort did so,
And what was Eglamor? who, bending down
The same, placed his beneath Sordello's crown,
Printed a kiss on his successor's hand,

Left one great tear on it, then joined his band
—In time; for some were watching at the door:
Who knows what envy may effect? "Give o'er,
"Nor charm his lips, nor craze him!" (here one spied
And disengaged the withered crown)—"Beside
"His crown? How prompt and clear those verses rung
"To answer yours! nay, sing them!" And he sung
Them calmly. Home he went; friends used to wait
His coming, zealous to congratulate;
But, to a man, so quickly runs report,
Could do no less than leave him, and escort
His rival. That eve, then, bred many a thought:
What must his future life be? was he brought
So low, who was so lofty this Spring morn?
At length he said, "Best sleep now with my scorn,
"And by to-morrow I devise some plain
"Expedient!" So, he slept, nor woke again.
They found as much, those friends, when they returned
O'erflowing with the marvels they had learned
About Sordello's paradise, his roves
Among the hills and valleys, plains and groves,
Wherein, no doubt, this lay was roughly cast,
Polished by slow degrees, completed last
To Eglamor's discomfiture and death.

Such form the chanters now, and, out of breath,
They lay the beaten man in his abode,
Naddo reciting that same luckless ode,
Doleful to hear. Sordello could explore
By means of it, however, one step more

In joy; and, mastering the round at length,
Learnt how to live in weakness as in strength,
When from his covert forth he stood, addressed
Eglamor, bade the tender ferns invest,
Primæval pines o'ercanopy his couch,
And, most of all, his fame—(shall I avouch
Eglamor heard it, dead though he might look,
And laughed as from his brow Sordello took
The crown, and laid on the bard's breast, and said
It was a crown, now, fit for poet's head?)
—Continue. Nor the prayer quite fruitless fell.
A plant they have, yielding a three-leaved bell
Which whitens at the heart ere noon, and ails
Till evening; evening gives it to her gales
To clear away with such forgotten things
As are an eyesore to the morn: this brings
Him to their mind, and bears his very name.
So much for Eglamor. My own month came;
'T was a sunrise of blossoming and May.
Beneath a flowering laurel thicket lay
Sordello; each new sprinkle of white stars
That smell fainter of wine than Massic jars
Dug up at Baiæ, when the south wind shed
The ripest, made him happier; filleted
And robed the same, only a lute beside
Lay on the turf. Before him far and wide
The country stretched: Goito slept behind
—The castle and its covert, which confined
Him with his hopes and fears; so fain of old

finds out the story of his birth

To leave the story of his birth untold.
At intervals, 'spite the fantastic glow
Of his Apollo-life, a certain low
And wretched whisper, winding through the bliss,
Admonished, no such fortune could be his,
All was quite false and sure to fade one day:
The closelier drew he round him his array
Of brilliance to expel the truth. But when
A reason for his difference from men
Surprised him at the grave, he took no rest
While aught of that old life, superbly dressed
Down to its meanest incident, remained
A mystery: alas, they soon explained
Away Apollo! and the tale amounts
To this: when at Vicenza both her counts
Banished the Vivaresi kith and kin,
Those Maltraversi hung on Ecelin,
Reviled him as he followed; he for spite
Must fire their quarter, though that self-same night
Among the flames young Ecelin was born
Of Adelaide, there too, and barely torn
From the roused populace hard on the rear,
By a poor archer when his chieftain's fear
Grew high; into the thick Elcorte leapt,
Saved her, and died; no creature left except
His child to thank. And when the full escape
Was known—how men impaled from chine to nape
Unlucky Prata, all to pieces spurned
Bishop Pistore's concubines, and burned

Taurello's entire household, flesh and fell,
Missing the sweeter prey—such courage well
Might claim reward. The orphan, ever since,
Sordello, had been nurtured by his prince
Within a blind retreat where Adelaide—
(For, once this notable discovery made,
The past at every point was understood)
—Might harbour easily when times were rude,
When Azzo schemed for Palma, to retrieve
That pledge of Agnes Este—loth to leave
Mantua unguarded with a vigilant eye,
Taurello biding there ambiguously—
He who could have no motive now to moil
For his own fortunes since their utter spoil—
As it were worth while yet (went the report)
To disengage himself from her. In short,
Apollo vanished; a mean youth, just named
His lady's minstrel, was to be proclaimed
—How shall I phrase it?—Monarch of the World!
For, on the morning that array was furled
Forever, and in place of one, a slave
To longings, wild indeed, but longings save
In dreams as wild, suppressed—one daring not
Assume the mastery such dreams allot,
Until a magical equipment, strength,
Grace, wisdom, decked him too,—he chose at length,
Content with unproved wits and failing frame,
In virtue of his simple will, to claim
That mastery, no less—to do his best

With means so limited, and let the rest
Go by,—the seal was set: never again
Sordello could in his own sight remain
One of the many, one with hopes and cares
And interests nowise distinct from theirs,
Only peculiar in a thriveless store
Of fancies, which were fancies and no more;
Never again for him and for the crowd
A common law was challenged and allowed
If calmly reasoned of, howe'er denied
By a mad impulse nothing justified
Short of Apollo's presence. The divorce
Is clear: why needs Sordello square his course
By any known example? Men no more
Compete with him than tree and flower before;
Himself, inactive, yet is greater far
Than such as act, each stooping to his star,
Acquiring thence his function; he has gained
The same result with meaner mortals trained
To strength or beauty, moulded to express
Each the idea that rules him; since no less
He comprehends that function, but can still
Embrace the others, take of might his fill
With Richard as of grace with Palma, mix
Their qualities, or for a moment fix
On one; abiding free meantime, uncramped
By any partial organ, never stamped
Strong, and to strength turning all energies—
Wise, and restricted to becoming wise—

That is, he loves not, nor possesses One
Idea that, star-like over, lures him on
To its exclusive purpose. "Fortunate!
"This flesh of mine ne'er strove to emulate
"A soul so various—took no casual mould
"Of the first fancy and, contracted, cold,
"Lay clogged forever thence, averse to change
"As that: whereas it left her free to range,
"Remains itself a blank, cast into shade,
"Encumbers little, if it cannot aid.
"So, range, my soul!—who, by self-consciousness,
"The last drop of all beauty dost express—
"The grace of seeing grace, a quintessence
"For thee: but for the world, that can dispense
"Wonder on men who, themselves, wonder—make
"A shift to love at second-hand, and take
"Those for its idols who but idolize,
"Themselves,—world that loves souls as strong or wise,
"Who, themselves, love strength, wisdom,—it shall bow
"Surely in unexampled worship now,
"Discerning me!"—

(Dear monarch, I beseech,
Notice how lamentably wide a breach
Is here: discovering this, discover too
What our poor world has possibly to do
With it! As pigmy natures as you please—
So much the better for you; take your ease;
Look on, and laugh; style yourself God alone;
Strangle some day with a cross olive-stone:

All that is right enough: but why want us
To know that you yourself know thus and thus?)
" The world shall bow to me conceiving all
" Man's life, who see its blisses, great and small,
" Afar—not tasting any; no machine
" To exercise my utmost will is mine:
" Be mine mere consciousness! Let them perceive
" What I could do, a mastery believe,
" Asserted and established to the throng
" By their selected evidence of song
" Which now shall prove, whate'er they are, or seek
" To be, I am—who take no pains to speak,
" Change no old standards of perfection, vex
" With no strange forms created to perplex,
" But will perform their bidding and no more,
" At their own satiating-point give o'er,
" While each shall love in me the love that leads
" His soul to its perfection." Song, not deeds,
(For we get tired) was chosen. Fate would brook
Mankind no other organ; he would look
For not another channel to dispense
His own volition, and receive their sense
Of its existing; but would be content,
Obstructed else, with merely verse for vent.
Nor should, for instance, strength an outlet seek
And, striving, be admired; nor grace bespeak
Wonder, displayed in gracious attitudes;
Nor wisdom, poured forth, change unseemly moods:
But he would give and take on song's one point.

Like some huge throbbing stone that, poised a-joint,
Sounds, to affect on its basaltic bed,
Must sue in just one accent; tempests shed
Thunder, and raves the landstorm: only let
That key by any little noise be set—
The far benighted hunter's halloo pitch
On that, the hungry curlew chance to scritch
Or serpent hiss it, rustling through the rift,
However loud, however low—all lift
The groaning monster, stricken to the heart.
Lo ye, the world's concernment, for its part,
And this, for his, will hardly interfere!
Its businesses in blood and blaze this year
But wile the hour away—a pastime slight
Till he shall step upon the platform: right!
And, now thus much is settled, cast in rough,
Proved feasible, be counselled! thought enough,—
Slumber, Sordello! any day will serve:
Were it a less digested plan! how swerve
To-morrow? Meanwhile eat these sun-dried grapes,
And watch the soaring hawk there! Life escapes
Merrily thus.

He thoroughly read o'er
His truchman Naddo's missive six times more,
Praying him visit Mantua and supply
A famished world.

The evening star was high
When he reached Mantua, but his fame arrived
Before him: friends applauded, foes connived,

And Naddo looked an angel, and the rest
Angels, and all these angels would be blest
Supremely by a song—the thrice-renowned
Goito manufacture. Then he found
(Casting about to satisfy the crowd)
That happy vehicle, so late allowed,
A sore annoyance; 't was the song's effect
He cared for, scarce the song itself: reflect!
In the past life, what might be singing's use?
Just to delight his Delians, whose profuse
Praise, not the toilsome process which procured
That praise, enticed Apollo: dreams abjured,
No overleaping means for ends—take both
For granted or take neither! I am loth
To say the rhymes at last were Eglamor's;
But Naddo, chuckling, bade competitors
Go pine; "the master certes meant to waste
"No effort, cautiously had probed the taste
"He 'd please anon: true bard, in short, disturb
"His title if they could; nor spur nor curb,
"Fancy nor reason, wanting in him; whence
"The staple of his verses, common sense:
"He built on man's broad nature—gift of gifts,
"That power to build! The world contented shifts
"With counterfeits enough, a dreary sort
"Of warriors, statesmen, ere it can extort
"Its poet-soul—that 's, after all, a freak
"(The having eyes to see and tongue to speak)
"With our herd's stupid sterling happiness

"So plainly incompatible that—yes—
"Yes—should a son of his improve the breed?
"And turn out poet, he were cursed indeed!"
"Well, there's Goito and its woods anon,
"If the worst happen; best go stoutly on
"Now!" thought Sordello.

Ay, and goes on yet!

You pother with your glossaries to get
A notion of the Troubadour's intent
In rondel, tenzon, virlai or sirvent—
Much as you study arras how to twirl
His angelot, plaything of page and girl
Once; but you surely reach, at last,—or, no!
Never quite reach what struck the people so,
As from the welter of their time he drew
Its elements successively to view,
Followed all actions backward on their course,
And catching up, unmingled at the source,
Such a strength, such a weakness, added then
A touch or two, and turned them into men.
Virtue took form, nor vice refused a shape;
Here heaven opened, there was hell agape,
As Saint this simpered past in sanctity,
Sinner the other flared portentous by
A greedy people. Then why stop, surprised
At his success? The scheme was realized
Too suddenly in one respect: a crowd
Praising, eyes quick to see, and lips as loud
To speak, delicious homage to receive,

The woman's breath to feel upon his sleeve,
Who said, "But Anafest—why asks he less
"Than Lucio, in your verses? how confess,
"It seemed too much but yestereve!"—the youth,
Who bade him earnestly, "Avow the truth!
"You love Bianca, surely, from your song;
"I knew I was unworthy!"—soft or strong,
In poured such tributes ere he had arranged
Ethereal ways to take them, sorted, changed,
Digested. Courted thus at unawares,
In spite of his pretensions and his cares,
He caught himself shamefully hankering
After the obvious petty joys that spring
From true life, fain relinquish pedestal
And condescend with pleasures—one and all
To be renounced, no doubt; for, thus to chain
Himself to single joys and so refrain
From tasting their quintessence, frustrates, sure,
His prime design; each joy must he abjure
Even for love of it.
He laughed: what sage
But perishes if from his magic page
He look because, at the first line, a proof
'T was heard salutes him from the cavern roof?
"On! Give yourself, excluding aught beside,
"To the day's task; compel your slave provide
"Its utmost at the soonest; turn the leaf
"Thoroughly conned. These lays of yours, in brief—
"Cannot men bear, now, something better?—fly

"A pitch beyond this unreal pageantry
"Of essences? the period sure has ceased
"For such: present us with ourselves, at least,
"Not portions of ourselves, mere loves and hates
"Made flesh: wait not!"

Awhile the poet waits
However. The first trial was enough:
He left imagining, to try the stuff
That held the imaged thing, and, let it writhe
Never so fiercely, scarce allowed a tithe
To reach the light—his Language. How he sought
The cause, conceived a cure, and slow re-wrought
That Language,—welding words into the crude
Mass from the new speech round him, till a rude
Armour was hammered out, in time to be
Approved beyond the Roman panoply
Melted to make it,—boots not. This obtained
With some ado, no obstacle remained
To using it; accordingly he took
An action with its actors, quite forsook
Himself to live in each, returned anon
With the result—a creature, and, by one
And one, proceeded leisurely to equip
Its limbs in harness of his workmanship.
"Accomplished! Listen, Mantuans!" Fond essay!
Piece after piece that armour broke away,
Because perceptions whole, like that he sought
To clothe, reject so pure a work of thought
As language: thought may take perception's place

But hardly co-exist in any case,
Being its mere presentment—of the whole
By parts, the simultaneous and the sole
By the successive and the many. Lacks
The crowd perception? painfully it tacks
Thought to thought, which Sordello, needing such,
Has rent perception into: it 's to clutch
And reconstruct—his office to diffuse,
Destroy: as hard, then, to obtain a Muse
As to become Apollo. "For the rest,
"E'en if some wondrous vehicle expressed
"The whole dream, what impertinence in me
"So to express it, who myself can be
"The dream! nor, on the other hand, are those
"I sing to, over-likely to suppose
"A higher than the highest I present
"Now, which they praise already: be content
"Both parties, rather—they with the old verse,
"And I with the old praise—far go, fare worse!"
A few adhering rivets loosed, upsprings
The angel, sparkles off his mail, and rings
Whirled from each delicatest limb it warps,
As might Apollo from the sudden corpse
Of Hyacinth have cast his luckless quoits.
He set to celebrating the exploits
Of Montfort o'er the Mountaineers.

Then came
The world's revenge: their pleasure, now his aim
Merely,—what was it? "Not to play the fool

"So much as learn our lesson in your school!"
Replied the world. He found that, every time
He gained applause by any ballad-rhyme,
His auditory recognised no jot
As he intended, and, mistaking not
Him for his meanest hero, ne'er was dunce
Sufficient to believe him—all, at once.
His will . . . conceive it caring for his will!
—Mantuans, the main of them, admiring still
How a mere singer, ugly, stunted, weak,
Had Montfort at completely (so to speak)
His fingers' ends; while past the praise-tide swept
To Montfort, either's share distinctly kept:
The true need for true merit!—his abates
Into a sort he most repudiates,
And on them angrily he turns. Who were
The Mantuans, after all, that he should care
About their recognition, ay or no?
In spite of the convention months ago,
(Why blink the truth?) was not he forced to help
This same ungrateful audience, every whelp
Of Naddo's litter, make them pass for peers
With the bright band of old Goito years,
As erst he toiled for flower or tree? Why, there
Sat Palma! Adelaide's funereal hair
Ennobled the next corner. Ay, he strewed
A fairy dust upon that multitude,
Although he feigned to take them by themselves;
His giants dignified those puny elves,

Sublimed their faint applause. In short, he found
Himself still footing a delusive round,
Remote as ever from the self-display
He meant to compass, hampered every way
By what he hoped assistance. Wherefore then
Continue, make believe to find in men
A use he found not?
Weeks, months, years went by;
And lo, Sordello vanished utterly,
Sundered in twain; each spectral part at strife
With each; one jarred against another life;
The Poet thwarting hopelessly the Man
Who, fooled no longer, free in fancy ran
Here, there; let slip no opportunities
As pitiful, forsooth, beside the prize
To drop on him some no-time and acquit
His constant faith (the Poet-half's to wit—
That waiving any compromise between
No joy and all joy kept the hunger keen
Beyond most methods)—of incurring scoff
From the Man-portion—not to be put off
With self-reflectings by the Poet's scheme,
Though ne'er so bright;—that sauntered forth in dream,
Dressed any how, nor waited mystic frames,
Immeasurable gifts, astounding claims,
But just his sorry self—who yet might be
Sorrier for aught he in reality
Achieved, so pinioned That the Poet-part,
Fondling, in turn of fancy, verse; the Art

Developing his soul a thousand ways—
Potent, by its assistance, to amaze
The multitude with majesties, convince
Each sort of nature, that same nature's prince
Accosted it. Language, the makeshift, grew
Into a bravest of expedients, too;
Apollo, seemed it now, perverse had thrown
Quiver and bow away, the lyre alone
Sufficed. While, out of dream, his day's work went
To tune a crazy tenzon or sirvent—
So hampered him the Man-part, thrust to judge
Between the bard and the bard's audience, grudge
A minute's toil that missed its due reward!
But the complete Sordello, Man and Bard,
John's cloud-girt angel, this foot on the land,
That on the sea, with, open in his hand,
A bitter-sweetling of a book—was gone.
Then, if internal struggles to be one
That frittered him incessantly piecemeal,
Referred, ne'er so obliquely, to the real
Mantuans! intruding ever with some call
To action while he pondered, once for all,
Which looked the easier effort—to pursue
This course, still leap o'er paltry joys, yearn through
The present ill-appreciated stage
Of self revealment, and compel the age
Know him; or else, forswearing bard-craft, wake
From out his lethargy and nobly shake
Off timid habits of denial, mix

With men, enjoy like men. Ere he could fix
On aught, in rushed the Mantuans; much they cared
For his perplexity! Thus unprepared,
The obvious, if not only, shelter lay
In deeds, the dull conventions of his day
Prescribed the like of him: why not be glad
'T is settled Palma's minstrel, good or bad,
Submits to this and that established rule?
Let Vidal change, or any other fool,
His murrey-coloured robe for filamot,
And crop his hair; too skin-deep, is it not,
Such vigour? Then, a sorrow to the heart,
His talk! Whatever topics they might start
Had to be groped for in his consciousness
Straight, and as straight delivered them by guess.
Only obliged to ask himself, "What was,"
A speedy answer followed; but, alas,
One of God's large ones, tardy to condense
Itself into a period; answers whence
A tangle of conclusions must be stripped
At any risk ere, trim to pattern clipped,
They matched rare specimens the Mantuan flock
Regaled him with, each talker from his stock
Of sorted-o'er opinions, every stage,
Juicy in youth or desiccate with age,
Fruits like the fig-tree's, rathe-ripe, rotten-rich,
Sweet-sour, all tastes to take: a practice which
He too had not impossibly attained,
Once either of those fancy-flights restrained;

(For, at conjecture how might words appear
To others, playing there what happened here,
And occupied abroad by what he spurned
At home, 't was slipped, the occasion he returned
To seize :) he 'd strike that lyre adroitly—speech,
Would but a twenty-cubit plectre reach ;
A clever hand, consummate instrument,
Were both brought close ; each excellency went
For nothing, else. The question Naddo asked,
Had just a lifetime moderately tasked
To answer, Naddo's fashion. More disgust
And more : why move his soul, since move it must
At minute's notice or as good it failed
To move at all? The end was, he retailed
Some ready-made opinion, put to use
This quip, that maxim, ventured reproduce
Gestures and tones—at any folly caught
Serving to finish with, nor too much sought
If false or true 't was spoken ; praise and blame
Of what he said grew pretty well the same
—Meantime awards to meantime acts : his soul,
Unequal to the compassing a whole,
Saw, in a tenth part, less and less to strive
About. And as for men in turn . . . contrive
Who could to take eternal interest
In them, so hate the worst, so love the best !
Though, in pursuance of his passive plan,
He hailed, decried, the proper way.

As Man

So figured he ; and how as Poet ? Verse
Came only not to a stand-still. The worse,
That his poor piece of daily work to do
Was, not sink under any rivals ; who
Loudly and long enough, without these qualms,
Tuned, from Bocafoli's stark-naked psalms,
To Plara's sonnets spoilt by toying with,
" As knops that stud some almug to the pith
" Prickèd for gum, wry thence, and crinklèd worse
" Than pursèd eyelids of a river-horse
" Sunning himself o' the slime when whirrs the breeze "—
Gad-fly, that is. He might compete with these !
But—but—
" Observe a pompion-twine afloat ;
" Pluck me one cup from off the castle-moat !
" Along with cup you raise leaf, stalk and root,
" The entire surface of the pool to boot.
" So could I pluck a cup, put in one song
" A single sight, did not my hand, too strong,
" Twitch in the least the root-strings of the whole.
" How should externals satisfy my soul ? "
" Why that 's precise the error Squarcialupe "
(Hazarded Naddo) " finds ; ' the man can't stoop
" ' To sing us out,' quoth he, ' a mere romance ;
" ' He'd fain do better than the best, enhance
" ' The subjects' rarity, work problems out
" ' Therewith :' now, you're a bard, a bard past doubt,
" And no philosopher ; why introduce
" Crotchets like these ? fine, surely, but no use

"In poetry—which still must be, to strike,
"Based upon common sense; there 's nothing like
"Appealing to our nature! what beside
"Was your first poetry? No tricks were tried
"In that, no hollow thrills, affected throes!
"'The man,' said we, 'tells his own joys and woes:
"'We 'll trust him.' Would you have your songs endure?
"Build on the human heart!—why, to be sure
"Yours is one sort of heart—but I mean theirs,
"Ours, every one's, the healthy heart one cares
"To build on! Central peace, mother of strength,
"That 's father of . . . nay, go yourself that length,
"Ask those calm-hearted doers what they do
"When they have got their calm! And is it true,
"Fire rankles at the heart of every globe?
"Perhaps. But these are matters one may probe
"Too deeply for poetic purposes:
"Rather select a theory that . . . yes,
"Laugh! what does that prove?—stations you midway
"And saves some little o'er-refining. Nay,
"That 's rank injustice done me! I restrict
"The poet? Don't I hold the poet picked
"Out of a host of warriors, statesmen . . . did
"I tell you? Very like! As well you hid
"That sense of power, you have! True bards believe
"All able to achieve what they achieve—
"That is, just nothing—in one point abide
"Profounder simpletons than all beside.
"Oh, ay! The knowledge that you are a bard

"Must constitute your prime, nay sole, reward!"
So prattled Naddo, busiest of the tribe
Of genius-haunters—how shall I describe
What grubs or nips or rubs or rips—your louse
For love, your flea for hate, magnanimous,
Malignant, Pappacoda, Tagliafer,
Picking a sustenance from wear and tear
By implements it sedulous employs
To undertake, lay down, mete out, o'er-toise
Sordello? Fifty creepers to elude
At once! They settled staunchly; shame ensued:
Behold the monarch of mankind succumb
To the last fool who turned him round his thumb,
As Naddo styled it! 'T was not worth oppose
The matter of a moment, gainsay those
He aimed at getting rid of; better think
Their thoughts and speak their speech, secure to slink
Back expeditiously to his safe place,
And chew the cud—what he and what his race
Were really, each of them. Yet even this
Conformity was partial. He would miss
Some point, brought into contact with them ere
Assured in what small segment of the sphere
Of his existence they attended him;
Whence blunders, falsehoods rectify—a grim
List—slur it over! How? If dreams were tried,
His will swayed sicklily from side to side,
Nor merely neutralized his waking act
But tended e'en in fancy to distract

The intermediate will, the choice of means.
He lost the art of dreaming: Mantuan scenes
Supplied a baron, say, he sang before,
Handsomely reckless, full to running o'er
Of gallantries; "abjure the soul, content
"With body, therefore!" Scarcely had he bent
Himself in dream thus low, when matter fast
Cried out, he found, for spirit to contrast
And task it duly; by advances slight,
The simple stuff becoming composite,
Count Lori grew Apollo—best recall
His fancy! Then would some rough peasant-Paul,
Like those old Ecelin confers with, glance
His gay apparel o'er; that countenance
Gathered his shattered fancy into one,
And, body clean abolished, soul alone
Sufficed the grey Paulician: by and by,
To balance the ethereality,
Passions were needed; foiled he sunk again.
Meanwhile the world rejoiced ('t is time explain)
Because a sudden sickness set it free
From Adelaide. Missing the mother-bee,
Her mountain-hive Romano swarmed; at once
A rustle-forth of daughters and of sons
Blackened the valley. "I am sick too, old,
"Half crazed I think; what good 's the Kaiser's gold
"To such an one? God help me! for I catch
"My children's greedy sparkling eyes at watch—
"'He bears that double breastplate on,' they say,

"'So many minutes less than yesterday!'
" Beside, Monk Hilary is on his knees
" Now, sworn to kneel and pray till God shall please
" Exact a punishment for many things
" You know, and some you never knew; which brings
" To memory, Azzo's sister Beatrix
" And Richard's Giglia are my Alberic's
" And Ecelin's betrothed; the Count himself
" Must get my Palma: Ghibellin and Guelf
" Mean to embrace each other." So began
Romano's missive to his fighting man
Taurello—on the Tuscan's death, away
With Friedrich sworn to sail from Naples' bay
Next month for Syria. Never thunder-clap
Out of Vesuvius' throat, like this mishap
Startled him. "That accursed Vicenza! I
" Absent, and she selects this time to die!
" Ho, fellows, for Vicenza!" Half a score
Of horses ridden dead, he stood before
Romano in his reeking spurs: too late—
" Boniface urged me, Este could not wait,"
The chieftain stammered; "let me die in peace—
" Forget me! Was it I e'er craved increase
" Of rule? Do you and Friedrich plot your worst
" Against the Father: as you found me first
" So leave me now. Forgive me! Palma, sure,
" Is at Goito still. Retain that lure—
" Only be pacified!"

The country rung

With such a piece of news: on every tongue,
How Ecelin's great servant, congeed off,
Had done a long day's service, so, might doff
The green and yellow, and recover breath
At Mantua, whither,—since Retrude's death,
(The girlish slip of a Sicilian bride
From Otho's house, he carried to reside
At Mantua till the Ferrarese should pile
A structure worthy her imperial style,
The gardens raise, the statues there enshrine,
She never lived to see)—although his line
Was ancient in her archives and she took
A pride in him, that city, nor forsook
Her child when he forsook himself and spent
A prowess on Romano surely meant
For his own growth—whither he ne'er resorts
If wholly satisfied (to trust reports)
With Ecelin. So, forward in a trice
Were shows to greet him. "Take a friend's advice,"
Quoth Naddo to Sordello, "nor be rash
"Because your rivals (nothing can abash
"Some folks) demur that we pronounced you best
"To sound the great man's welcome; 't is a test,
"Remember! Strojavacca looks asquint,
"The rough fat sloven; and there's plenty hint
"Your pinions have received of late a shock—
"Outsoar them, cobswan of the silver flock!
"Sing well!" A signal wonder, song 's no whit
Facilitated.

Fast the minutes flit;
Another day, Sordello finds, will bring
The soldier, and he cannot choose but sing;
So, a last shift, quits Mantua—slow, alone:
Out of that aching brain, a very stone,
Song must be struck. What occupies that front?
Just how he was more awkward than his wont
The night before, when Naddo, who had seen
Taurello on his progress, praised the mien
For dignity no crosses could affect—
Such was a joy, and might not he detect
A satisfaction if established joys
Were proved imposture? Poetry annoys
Its utmost: wherefore fret? Verses may come
Or keep away! And thus he wandered, dumb
Till evening, when he paused, thoroughly spent,
On a blind hill-top: down the gorge he went,
Yielding himself up as to an embrace.
The moon came out; like features of a face,
A querulous fraternity of pines,
Sad blackthorn clumps, leafless and grovelling vines
Also came out, made gradually up
The picture; 't was Goito's mountain-cup
And castle. He had dropped through one defile
He never dared explore, the Chief erewhile
Had vanished by. Back rushed the dream, enwrapped
Him wholly. 'T was Apollo now they lapped,
Those mountains, not a pettish minstrel meant
To wear his soul away in discontent,

Brooding on fortune's malice. Heart and brain
Swelled; he expanded to himself again,
As some thin seedling spice-tree starved and frail,
Pushing between cat's head and ibis' tail
Crusted into the porphyry pavement smooth,
—Suffered remain just as it sprung, to soothe
The Soldan's pining daughter, never yet
Well in her chilly green-glazed minaret,—
When rooted up, the sunny day she died,
And flung into the common court beside
Its parent tree. Come home, Sordello! Soon
Was he low muttering, beneath the moon,
Of sorrow saved, of quiet evermore,—
Since from the purpose, he maintained before,
Only resulted wailing and hot tears.
Ah, the slim castle! dwindled of late years,
But more mysterious; gone to ruin—trails
Of vine through every loop-hole. Nought avails
The night as, torch in hand, he must explore
The maple chamber: did I say, its floor
Was made of intersecting cedar beams?
Worn now with gaps so large, there blew cold streams
Of air quite from the dungeon; lay your ear
Close and 't is like, one after one, you hear
In the blind darkness water drop. The nests
And nooks retain their long ranged vesture-chests
Empty and smelling of the iris root
The Tuscan grated o'er them to recruit
Her wasted wits. Palma was gone that day,

Said the remaining women. Last, he lay
Beside the Carian group reserved and still.
The Body, the Machine for Acting Will,
Had been at the commencement proved unfit;
That for Demonstrating, Reflecting it,
Mankind—no fitter: was the Will Itself
In fault?

His forehead pressed the moonlit shelf
Beside the youngest marble maid awhile;
Then, raising it, he thought, with a long smile,
"I shall be king again!" as he withdrew
The envied scarf; into the font he threw
His crown.

Next day, no poet! "Wherefore?" asked
Taurello, when the dance of Jongleurs, masked
As devils, ended; "don't a song come next?"
The master of the pageant looked perplexed
Till Naddo's whisper came to his relief.
"His Highness knew what poets were: in brief,
"Had not the tetchy race prescriptive right
"To peevishness, caprice? or, call it spite,
"One must receive their nature in its length
"And breadth, expect the weakness with the strength!"
—So phrasing, till, his stock of phrases spent,
The easy-natured soldier smiled assent,
Settled his portly person, smoothed his chin,
And nodded that the bull-bait might begin.

BOOK THE THIRD.

NATURE MAY TRIUMPH THEREFORE ;

AND the font took them : let our laurels lie !
Braid moonfern now with mystic trifoly
Because once more Goito gets, once more,
Sordello to itself ! A dream is o'er,
And the suspended life begins anew ;
Quiet those throbbing temples, then, subdue
That cheek's distortion ! Nature's strict embrace,
Putting aside the past, shall soon efface
Its print as well—factitious humours grown
Over the true—loves, hatreds not his own—
And turn him pure as some forgotten vest
Woven of painted byssus, silkiest
Tufting the Tyrrhene whelk's pearl-sheeted lip,
Left welter where a trireme let it slip
I' the sea, and vexed a satrap ; so the stain
O' the world forsakes Sordello, with its pain,
Its pleasure : how the tinct loosening escapes,
Cloud after cloud ! Mantua's familiar shapes
Die, fair and foul die, fading as they flit,
Men, women, and the pathos and the wit,
Wise speech and foolish, deeds to smile or sigh
For, good, bad, seemly or ignoble, die.
The last face glances through the eglantines,

The last voice murmurs 'twixt the blossomed vines
Of Men, of that machine supplied by thought
To compass self-perception with, he sought
By forcing half himself—an insane pulse
Of a god's blood, on clay it could convulse,
Never transmute—on human sights and sounds,
To watch the other half with; irksome bounds
It ebbs from to its source, a fountain sealed
Forever. Better sure be unrevealed
Than part-revealed: Sordello well or ill
Is finished: then what further use of Will,
Point in the prime idea not realized,
An oversight? inordinately prized,
No less, and pampered with enough of each
Delight to prove the whole above its reach.
"To need become all natures, yet retain
"The law of my own nature—to remain
"Myself, yet yearn . . . as if that chestnut, think,
"Should yearn for this first larch-bloom crisp and pink,
"Or those pale fragrant tears where zephyrs stanch
"March wounds along the fretted pine-tree branch!
"Will and the means to show will, great and small,
"Material, spiritual,—abjure them all
"Save any so distinct, they may be left
"To amuse, not tempt become! and, thus bereft,
"Just as I first was fashioned would I be!
"Nor, moon, is it Apollo now, but me
"Thou visitest to comfort and befriend!
"Swim thou into my heart, and there an end,

"Since I possess thee!—nay, thus shut mine eyes
"And know, quite know, by this heart's fall and rise,
"When thou dost bury thee in clouds, and when
"Out-standest: wherefore practise upon men
"To make that plainer to myself?"
Over a sweet and solitary year
Wasted; or simply notice change in him—
How eyes, bright with exploring once, grew dim
And satiate with receiving. Some distress
Was caused, too, by a sort of consciousness
Under the imbecility,—nought kept
That down; he slept, but was aware he slept,
So, frustrated: as who brainsick made pact
Erst with the overhanging cataract
To deafen him, yet still distinguished slow
His own blood's measured clicking at his brow.
To finish. One declining Autumn day—
Few birds about the heaven chill and grey,
No wind that cared trouble the tacit woods—
He sauntered home complacently, their moods
According, his and nature's. Every spark
Of Mantua life was trodden out; so dark
The embers, that the Troubadour, who sung
Hundreds of songs, forgot, its trick his tongue,
Its craft his brain, how either brought to pass
Singing at all; that faculty might class
With any of Apollo's now. The year
Began to find its early promise sere

As well. Thus beauty vanishes ; thus stone
Outlingers flesh : nature's and his youth gone,
They left the world to you, and wished you joy.
When, stopping his benevolent employ,
A presage shuddered through the welkin ; harsh
The earth's remonstrance followed. 'T was the marsh
Gone of a sudden. Mincio, in its place,
Laughed, a broad water, in next morning's face,
And, where the mists broke up immense and white
I' the steady wind, burned like a spilth of light
Out of the crashing of a myriad stars.
And here was nature, bound by the same bars
Of fate with him !

"No ! youth once gone is gone :
" Deeds let escape are never to be done.
" Leaf-fall and grass-spring for the year ; for us—
" Oh forfeit I unalterably thus
" My chance ? nor two lives wait me, this to spend
" Learning save that ? Nature has time, may mend
" Mistake, she knows occasion will recur ;
" Landslip or seabreach, how affects it her
" With her magnificent resources ?—I
" Must perish once and perish utterly.
" Not any strollings now at even-close
" Down the field-path, Sordello ! by thorn-rows
" Alive with lamp-flies, swimming spots of fire
" And dew, outlining the black cypress' spire
" She waits you at, Elys, who heard you first
" Woo her, the snow-month through, but ere she durst

" Answer 't was April. Linden-flower-time-long
" Her eyes were on the ground; 't is July, strong
" Now; and because white dust-clouds overwhelm
" The woodside, here or by the village elm
" That holds the moon, she meets you, somewhat pale,
" But letting you lift up her coarse flax veil
" And whisper (the damp little hand in yours)
" Of love, heart's love, your heart's love that endures
" Till death. Tush! No mad mixing with the rout
" Of haggard ribalds wandering about
" The hot torchlit wine-scented island-house
" Where Friedrich holds his wickedest carouse,
" Parading,—to the gay Palermitans,
" Soft Messinese, dusk Saracenic clans
" Nuocera holds,—those tall grave dazzling Norse,
" High-cheeked, lank-haired, toothed whiter than the morse,
" Queen of the caves of jet stalactites,
" He sent his barks to fetch through icy seas,
" The blind night seas without a saving star,
" And here in snowy birdskin robes they are,
" Sordello!—here, mollitious alcoves gilt
" Superb as Byzant domes that devils built!
" —Ah, Byzant, there again! no chance to go
" Ever like august pleasant Dandolo,
" Worshipping hearts about him for a wall,
" Conducted, blind eyes, hundred years and all,
" Through vanquished Byzant where friends note for him
" What pillar, marble massive, sardius slim,

"'T were fittest he transport to Venice' Square—
"Flattered and promised life to touch them there
"Soon, by those fervid sons of senators!
"No more lifes, deaths, loves, hatreds, peaces, wars!
"Ah, fragments of a whole ordained to be,
"Points in the life I waited! what are ye
"But roundels of a ladder which appeared
"Awhile the very platform it was reared
"To lift me on?—that happiness I find
"Proofs of my faith in, even in the blind
"Instinct which bade forego you all unless
"Ye led me past yourselves. Ay, happiness
"Awaited me; the way, life should be used,
"Was to acquire, and deeds like you conduced
"To teach it by a self-revealment, deemed
"The very use, so long! Whatever seemed
"Progress to that, was pleasure; aught that stayed
"My reaching it—no pleasure. I have laid
"The ladder down; I climb not; still, aloft
"The platform stretches! Blisses strong and soft,
"I dared not entertain, elude me; yet
"Never of what they promised could I get
"A glimpse till now! The common sort, the crowd,
"Exist, perceive; with Being are endowed,
"However slight, distinct from what they See,
"However bounded; Happiness must be,
"To feed the first by gleanings from the last,
"Attain its qualities, and slow or fast
"Become what they behold; such peace-in-strife

"By transmutation, is the Use of Life,
"The Alien turning Native to the soul
"Or body—which instructs me; I am whole
"There and demand a Palma; had the world
"Been from my soul to a like distance hurled,
"'T were Happiness to make it one with me:
"Whereas I must, ere I begin to Be,
"Include a world, in flesh, I comprehend
"In spirit now; and this done, what 's to blend
"With? Nought is Alien in the world—my Will
"Owns all already; yet can turn it still
"Less Native, since my Means to correspond
"With Will are so unworthy, 't was my bond
"To tread the very joys that tantalize
"Most now, into a grave, never to rise.
"I die then! Will the rest agree to die?
"Next Age or no? Shall its Sordello try
"Clue after clue, and catch at last the clue
"I miss?—that 's underneath my finger too,
"Twice, thrice a day, perhaps,—some yearning traced
"Deeper, some petty consequence embraced
"Closer! Why fled I Mantua, then?—complained
"So much my Will was fettered, yet remained
"Content within a tether half the range
"I could assign it?—able to exchange
"My ignorance (I felt) for knowledge, and
"Idle because I could thus understand—
"Could e'en have penetrated to its core
"Our mortal mystery, and yet forbore,

" Preferred elaborating in the dark
" My casual stuff, by any wretched spark
" Born of my predecessors, though one stroke
" Of mine had brought the flame forth! Mantua's yoke,
" My minstrel's-trade, was to behold mankind,—
" My own concernment—just to bring my mind
" Behold, just extricate, for my acquist,
" Each object suffered stifle in the mist
" Which hazard, use and blindness could impose
" In their relation to myself."

He rose.

The level wind carried above the firs
Clouds, the irrevocable travellers,
Onward.

" Pushed thus into a drowsy copse,
" Arms twine about my neck, each eyelid drops
" Under a humid finger; while there fleets,
" Outside the screen, a pageant time repeats
" Never again! To be deposed, immured
" Clandestinely—still petted, still assured
" To govern were fatiguing work—the Sight"
" Fleeting meanwhile! 'T is noontide: wreak ere night
" Somehow my will upon it, rather! Slake
" This thirst somehow, the poorest impress take
" That serves! A blasted bud displays you, torn,
" Faint rudiments of the full flower unborn;
" But who divines what glory coats o'erclasp
" Of the bulb dormant in the mummy's grasp
" Taurello sent?" . . .

" Taurello? Palma sent
" Your Trouvere," (Naddo interposing leant
Over the lost bard's shoulder)—" and, believe,
" You cannot more reluctantly receive
" Than I pronounce her message: we depart
" Together. What avail a poet's heart
" Verona's pomps and gauds? five blades of grass
" Suffice him. News? Why, where your marish was,
" On its mud-banks smoke fast rises after smoke
" I' the valley, like a spout of hell new-broke.
" Oh, the world's tidings! small your thanks, I guess,
" For them. The father of our Patroness,
" Has played Taurello an astounding trick,
" Parts between Ecelin and Alberic
" His wealth and goes into a convent: both
" Wed Guelfs: the Count and Palma plighted troth
" A week since at Verona: and they want
" You doubtless to contrive the marriage-chant
" Ere Richard storms Ferrara." Then was told
The tale from the beginning—how, made bold
By Salinguerra's absence, Guelfs had burned
And pillaged till he unawares returned
To take revenge: how Azzo and his friend
Were doing their endeavour, how the end
Of the siege was nigh, and how the Count, released
From further care, would with his marriage-feast
Inaugurate a new and better rule,
Absorbing thus Romano.

" Shall I school

" My master," added Naddo, " and suggest
" How you may clothe in a poetic vest
" These doings, at Verona? | Your response
" To Palma! Wherefore jest? 'Depart at once?'
" A good resolve! In truth, I hardly hoped
" So prompt an acquiescence. Have you groped
" Out wisdom in the wilds here?—Thoughts may be
" Over-poetical for poetry.
" Pearl-white, you poets liken Palma's neck;
" And yet what spoils an orient like some speck
" Of genuine white, turning its own white grey?
" You take me? Curse the cicala!"

One more day.

One eve—appears Verona! Many a group,
(You mind) instructed of the osprey's swoop
On lynx and ounce, was gathering—Christendom
Sure to receive, whate'er the end was, from
The evening's purpose cheer or detriment,
Since Friedrich only waited some event
Like this, of Ghibellins establishing
Themselves within Ferrara, ere, as King
Of Lombardy, he 'd glad descend there, wage
Old warfare with the Pontiff, disengage
His barons from the burghers, and restore
The rule of Charlemagne, broken of yore
By Hildebrand.

In the palace, each by each,
Sordello sat and Palma: little speech
At first in that dim closet, face with face

(Despite the tumult in the market-place)
Exchanging quick low laughters: now would rush
Word upon word to meet a sudden flush,
A look left off, a shifting lips' surmise—
But for the most part their two histories
Ran best thro' the locked fingers and linked arms.
And so the night flew on with its alarms
Till in burst one of Palma's retinue;
"Now, lady!" gasped he. Then arose the two
And leaned into Verona's air, dead-still.
A balcony lay black beneath until
Out, 'mid a gush of torchfire, grey-haired men
Came on it and harangued the people: then
Sea-like that people surging to and fro
Shouted, "Hale forth the carroch—trumpets, ho,
"A flourish! Run it in the ancient grooves!
"Back from the bell! Hammer—that whom behoves
"May hear the League is up! Peal—learn who
list,
"Verona means not be the first break tryst
"To-morrow with the League!"

Enough. Now turn—
Over the eastern cypresses: discern!
Is any beacon set a-glimmer?

Rang
The air with shouts that overpowered the clang
Of the incessant carroch, even: "Haste—
"The Candle 's at the gateway! ere it waste,
"Each soldier stand beside it, armed to march

* the passages in quotation marks are in the Guelf spirit: this explanation is Ghibelline, say from Browning himself " I. B. 505

"With Tiso Sampier through the eastern arch!"
Ferrara's succoured, Palma! Once again
They sat together; some strange thing in train
To say, so difficult was Palma's place
In taking, with a coy fastidious grace
Like the bird's flutter ere it fix and feed.
But when she felt she held her friend indeed
Safe, she threw back her curls, began implant
Her lessons; telling of another want
Goito's quiet nourished than his own;
Palma—to serve, as him—be served, alone
Importing; Agnes' milk so neutralized
The blood of Ecelin. Nor be surprised
If, while Sordello fain had captive led
Nature, in dream was Palma subjected
To some out-soul, which dawned not, though she pined
Delaying till its advent, heart and mind,
Their life. "How dared I let expand the force
"Within me, till some out-soul, whose resource
"It grew for, should direct it? Every law
"Of life, its every fitness, every flaw,
"Must One determine whose corporeal shape
"Would be no other than the prime escape
"And revelation to me of a Will
"Orb-like o'ershrouded and inscrutable
"Above, save at the point which, I should know,
"Shone that myself, my powers, might overflow
"So far, so much; as now it signified

" Which earthly shape it henceforth chose my guide,
" Whose mortal lip selected to declare
" Its oracles, what fleshly garb would wear
" —The first of intimations, whom to love ;
" The next, how love him. Seemed that orb, above
" The castle-covert and the mountain-close,
" Slow in appearing,—if beneath it rose
" Cravings, aversions,—did our green precinct
" Take pride in me, at unawares distinct
" With this or that endowment,—how, repressed
" At once, such jetting power shrunk to the rest !
" Was I to have a chance touch spoil me, leave
" My spirit thence unfitted to receive
" The consummating spell ?—that spell so near
" Moreover ! 'Waits he not the waking year ?
" ' His almond-blossoms must be honey-ripe
" ' By this ; to welcome him, fresh runnels stripe
" ' The thawed ravines ; because of him, the wind
" ' Walks like a herald. I shall surely find
" ' Him now !'

" And chief, that earnest April morn
" Of Richard's Love-court, was it time, so worn
" And white my cheek, so idly my blood beat,
" Sitting that morn beside the Lady's feet
" And saying as she prompted ; till outburst
" One face from all the faces—not then first
" I knew it ; where in maple chamber glooms,
" Crowned with what sanguine-heart pomegranate blooms
" Advanced it ever ? Men's acknowledgment

"Sanctioned my own: 't was taken, Palma's bent,—
"Sordello, accepted.
"And the Tuscan dumb
"Sat scheming, scheming. Ecelin would come
"Gaunt, scared, 'Cesano baffles me,' he'd say:
"'Better I fought it out, my father's way!
"'Strangle Ferrara in its drowning flats,
"'And you and your Taurello yonder—what's
"'Romano's business there?' An hour's concern
"To cure the froward Chief!—induced return
"Much heartened from those overmeaning eyes,
"Wound up to persevere,—his enterprise
"Marked out anew, its exigent of wit
"Apportioned,—she at liberty to sit
"And scheme against the next emergence, I—
"To covet her Taurello-sprite, made fly
"Or fold the wing—to con your horoscope
"For leave command those steely shafts shoot ope,
"Or straight assuage their blinding eagerness
"To blank smooth snow. What semblance of success
"To any of my plans for making you
"Mine and Romano's? Break the first wall through,
"Tread o'er the ruins of the Chief, supplant
"His sons beside, still, vainest were the vaunt:
"There, Salinguerra would obstruct me sheer,
"And the insuperable Tuscan, here,
"Stay me! But one wild eve that Lady died
"In her lone chamber: only I beside:
"Taurello far at Naples, and my sire

"At Padua, Ecelin away in ire
"With Alberic. She held me thus—a clutch
"To make our spirits as our bodies touch—
"And so began flinging the past up, heaps
"Of uncouth treasure from their sunless sleeps
"Within her soul; deeds rose along with dreams,
"Fragments of many miserable schemes,
"Secrets, more secrets, then—no, not the last—
"'Mongst others, like a casual trick o' the past,
"How . . . ay, she told me, gathering up her face,
"All left of it, into one arch-grimace
"To die with . . .
"Friend, 't is gone! but not the fear
"Of that fell laughing, heard as now I hear.
"Nor faltered voice, nor seemed her heart grow weak
"When i' the midst abrupt she ceased to speak
"—Dead, as to serve a purpose, mark!—for in
"Rushed o' the very instant Ecelin
"(How summoned, who divines?)—looking as if
"He understood why Adelaide lay stiff
"Already in my arms; for, 'Girl, how must
"'I manage Este in the matter thrust
"'Upon me, how unravel your bad coil?—
"'Since' (he declared) 't is on your brow—a soil
"'Like hers, there!' then in the same breath, 'he lacked
"'No counsel after all, had signed no pact
"'With devils, nor was treason here or there,
"'Goito or Vicenza, his affair:
"'He buried it in Adelaide's deep grave,

" ' Would begin life afresh, now,—would not slave
" ' For any Friedrich's nor Taurello's sake!
" ' What booted him to meddle or to make
" ' In Lombardy?' And afterward I knew
" The meaning of his promise to undo
" All she had done—why marriages were made,
" New friendships entered on, old followers paid
" With curses for their pains,—new friends' amaze
" At height, when, passing out by Gate St. Blaise,
" He stopped short in Vicenza, bent his head
" Over a friar's neck,—' had vowed,' he said,
" ' Long since, nigh thirty years, because his wife
" ' And child were saved there, to bestow his life
" ' On God, his gettings on the Church.'
" Exiled
" Within Goito, still one dream beguiled
" My days and nights; 't was found, the orb I sought
" To serve, those glimpses came of Fomalhaut,
" No other: but how serve it?—authorize
" You and Romano mingle destinies?
" And straight Romano's angel stood beside
" Me who had else been Boniface's bride,
" For Salinguerra 't was, with neck low bent,
" And voice lightened to music, (as he meant
" To learn not teach me,) who withdrew the pall
" From the dead past and straight revived it all,
" Making me see how first Romano waxed,
" Wherefore he waned now, why, if I relaxed
" My grasp (even I!) would drop a thing effete,

"Frayed by itself, unequal to complete
"Its course, and counting every step astray
"A gain so much. Romano, every way
"Stable, a Lombard House now—why start back
"Into the very outset of its track?
"This patching principle which late allied
"Our House with other Houses—what beside
"Concerned the apparition, the first Knight
"Who followed Conrad hither in such plight
"His utmost wealth was summed in his one steed?
"For Ecelo, that prowler, was decreed
"A task, in the beginning hazardous
"To him as ever task can be to us;
"But did the weather-beaten thief despair
"When first our crystal cincture of warm air,—
"That binds the Trevisan,—as its spice-belt
"(Crusaders say) the tract where Jesus dwelt,—
"Furtive he pierced, and Este was to face—
"Despaired Saponian strength of Lombard grace?
"Tried he at making surer aught made sure,
"Maturing what already was mature?
"No; his heart prompted Ecelo, 'Confront
"'Este, inspect yourself. What's nature? Wont.
"'Discard three-parts your nature, and adopt
"'The rest as an advantage!' Old strength propped
"The man who first grew Podestà among
"The Vicentines, no less than, while there sprung
"His palace up in Padua like a threat,
"Their noblest spied a grace, unnoticed yet

" In Conrad's crew. Thus far the object gained,
" Romano was established—has remained—
" For are you not Italian, truly peers
" With Este? 'Azzo' better soothes our ears
" Than 'Alberic?' or is this lion's-crine
" From over-mounts' (this yellow hair of mine)
" " 'So weak a graft on Agnes Este's stock?'
" (Thus went he on with something of a mock)
" " 'Wherefore recoil, then, from the very fate
" " 'Conceded you, refuse to imitate
" " 'Your model farther? Este long since left
" " 'Being mere Este: as a blade its heft,
" " 'Este required the Pope to further him:
" " 'And you, the Kaiser—whom your father's whim
" " 'Foregoes or, better, never shall forego
" " 'If Palma dare pursue what Ecelo
" " 'Commenced, but Ecelin desists from: just
" " 'As Adelaide of Susa could intrust
" " 'Her donative,—her Piedmont given the Pope,
" " 'Her Alpine-pass for him to shut or ope
" " 'Twixt France and Italy,—to the superb
" " 'Matilda's perfecting,—so, lest aught curb
" " 'Our Adelaide's great counter-project for
" " 'Giving her Trentine to the Emperor
" " 'With passage here from Germany,—shall you
" " 'Take it,—my slender plodding talent, too!'
" —Urged me Taurello with his half-smile.

" He

" As Patron of the scattered family

" Conveyed me to his Mantua, kept in bruit
" Azzo's alliances and Richard's suit
" Until, the Kaiser excommunicate,
" 'Nothing remains,' Taurello said, 'but wait
" 'Some rash procedure: Palma was the link,
" 'As Agnes' child, between us, and they shrink
" 'From losing Palma: judge if we advance,
" 'Your father's method, your inheritance!'
" That day I was betrothed to Boniface
" At Padua by Taurello's self, took place
" The outrage of the Ferrarese: again,
" That day I sought Verona with the train
" Agreed for,—by Taurello's policy
" Convicting Richard of the fault, since we
" Were present to annul or to confirm,—
" Richard, whose patience had outstayed its term,
" Quitted Verona for the siege.

" And now
" What glory may engird Sordello's brow
" Through this? A month since at Oliero slunk
" All that was Ecelin into a monk;
" But how could Salinguerra so forget
" His liege of thirty years as grudge even yet
" One effort to recover him? He sent
" Forthwith the tidings of this last event
" To Ecelin—declared that he, despite
" The recent folly, recognized his right
" To order Salinguerra: 'Should he wring
" 'Its uttermost advantage out, or fling

" 'This chance away? Or were his sons now Head
" 'Of the House?' Through me Taurello's missive sped;
" My father's answer will by me return.
" Behold! 'For him,' he writes, 'no more concern
" 'With strife than for his children, with fresh plots
" 'Of Friedrich. Old engagements out he blots
" 'For aye: Taurello shall no more subserve,
" 'Nor Ecelin impose.' Lest this unnerve
" Taurello at this juncture, slack his grip
" Of Richard, suffer the occasion slip,—
" I, in his sons' default (who, mating with
" Este, forsake Romano as the frith
" Its mainsea for the firmland, sea makes head
" Against) I stand, Romano,—in their stead
" Assume the station they desert, and give
" Still, as the Kaiser's representative,
" Taurello licence he demands. Midnight—
" Morning—by noon to-morrow, making light
" Of the League's issue, we, in some gay weed
" Like yours, disguised together, may precede
" The arbitrators to Ferrara: reach
" Him, let Taurello's noble accents teach
" The rest! Then say if I have misconceived
" Your destiny, too readily believed
" The Kaiser's cause your own!"
And Palma's fled.

* Though no affirmative disturbs the head,
A dying lamp-flame sinks and rises o'er,
Like the alighted planet Pollux wore,

Until, morn breaking, he resolves to be
Gate-vein of this heart's blood of Lombardy,
Soul of this body—to wield this aggregate
Of souls and bodies, and so conquer fate
Though he should live—a centre of disgust
Even—apart, core of the outward crust
He vivifies, assimilates. For thus
I bring Sordello to the rapturous
Exclaim at the crowd's cry, because one round
Of life was quite accomplished; and he found
Not only that a soul, whate'er its might,
Is insufficient to its own delight,
Both in corporeal organs and in skill
By means of such to body forth its Will—
And, after, insufficient to apprise
Men of that Will, oblige them recognise
The Hid by the Revealed—but that, the last
Nor lightest of the struggles overpast,
His Will, bade abdicate, which would not void
The throne, might sit there, suffer be enjoyed
Mankind, a varied and divine array
Incapable of homage, the first way,
Nor fit to render incidentally
Tribute connived at, taken by the by,
In joys. If thus with warrant to rescind
The ignominious exile of mankind—
Whose proper service, ascertained intact
As yet, (to be by him themselves made act,
Not watch Sordello acting each of them)

Was to secure—if the true diadem
Seemed imminent while our Sordello drank
The wisdom of that golden Palma,—thank
Verona's Lady in her citadel
Founded by Gaulish Brennus, legends tell:
And truly when she left him, the sun reared
A head like the first clamberer's that peered
A-top the Capitol, his face on flame
With triumph, triumphing till Manlius came.
Nor slight too much my rhymes—that spring, dispread,
Dispart, disperse, lingering over head
Like an escape of angels! Rather say,
My transcendental platan! mounting gay
(An archimage so courts a novice-queen)
With tremulous silvered trunk, whence branches sheen
Laugh out, thick-foliaged next, a-shiver soon
With coloured buds, then glowing like the moon
One mild flame,—last a pause, a burst, and all
Her ivory limbs are smothered by a fall,
Bloom-flinders and fruit-sparkles and leaf-dust,
Ending the weird work prosecuted just
For her amusement; he decrepit, stark,
Dozes; her uncontrolled delight may mark
Apart—

Yet not so, surely never so!

Only, as good my soul were suffered go
O'er the lagune: forth fare thee, put aside—
Entrance thy synod, as a god may glide
Out of the world he fills, and leave it mute

For myriad ages as we men compute,
Returning into it without a break
O' the consciousness! They sleep, and I awake
O'er the lagune, being at Venice.

Note,

In just such songs as Eglamor (say) wrote
With heart and soul and strength, for he believed
Himself achieving all to be achieved
By singer—in such songs you find alone
Completeness, judge the song and singer one,
And either purpose answered, his in it
Or its in him: while from true works (to wit
Sordello's dream-performances that will
Be never more than dreamed) escapes there still
Some proof, the singer's proper life was 'neath
The life his song exhibits, this a sheath
To that; a passion and a knowledge far
Transcending these, majestic as they are,
Smouldered; his lay was but an episode
In the bard's life: which evidence you owed
To some slight weariness, some looking-off
Or start-away. The childish skit or scoff
In "Charlemagne," (his poem, dreamed divine
In every point except one silly line
About the restiff daughters)—what may lurk
In that? "My life commenced before this work,"
(So I interpret the significance
Of the bard's start aside and look askance)
"My life continues after: on I fare

BIBLIOTHECA REGIA MONACENSIS

" With no more stopping, possibly, no care
" To note the undercurrent, the why and how,
" Where, when, of the deeper life, as thus just now.
" But, silent, shall I cease to live? Alas
" For you! who sigh, 'When shall it come to pass
" ' We read that story? How will he compress
" ' The future gains, his life's true business,
" ' Into the better lay which—that one flout,
" ' Howe'er inopportune it be, lets out—
" ' Engrosses him already, though professed
" ' To meditate with us eternal rest,
" ' And partnership in all his life has found?' "
'T is but a sailor's promise, weather-bound:
" Strike sail, slip cable, here the bark be moored
" For once, the awning stretched, the poles assured!
" Noontide above; except the wave's crisp dash,
" Or buzz of colibri, or tortoise' splash,
" The margin 's silent: out with every spoil
" Made in our tracking, coil by mighty coil,
" This serpent of a river to his head
" I' the midst! Admire each treasure, as we spread
" The bank, to help us tell our history
" Aright: give ear, endeavour to descry
" The groves of giant rushes, how they grew
" Like demons' endlong tresses we sailed through,
" What mountains yawned, forests to give us vent
" Opened, each doleful side, yet on we went
" Till . . . may that beetle (shake your cap) attest
" The springing of a land-wind from the West!"

—Wherefore? Ah yes, you frolic it to-day!
To-morrow, and, the pageant moved away
Down to the poorest tent-pole, we and you
Part company: no other may pursue
Eastward your voyage, be informed what fate
Intends, if triumph or decline await
The tempter of the everlasting steppe.

* I muse this on a ruined palace-step
At Venice: why should I break off, nor sit
Longer upon my step, exhaust the fit
England gave birth to? Who 's adorable
Enough to reclaim a —— no Sordello's Will
Alack!—be queen to me? That Bassanese
Busied among her smoking fruit-boats? These
Perhaps from our delicious Asolo
Who twinkle, pigeons o'er the portico
Not prettier, bind June lilies into sheaves
To deck the bridge-side chapel, dropping leaves
Soiled by their own loose gold-meal? Ah, beneath
The cool arch stoops she, brownest-cheek! Her wreath
Endures a month—a half month—if I make
A queen of her, continue for her sake
Sordello's story? Nay, that Paduan girl
Splashes with barer legs where a live whirl
In the dead black Giudecca proves, sea-weed
Drifting has sucked down three, four, all indeed
Save one pale-red striped, pale-blue turbaned post
For gondolas.

You sad dishevelled ghost

That pluck at me and point, are you advised
I breathe? Let stay those girls (e'en her disguised
—Jewels in the locks that love no crownet like
Their native field-buds and the green wheat spike,
So fair!—who left this end of June's turmoil,
Shook off, as might a lily its gold soil,
Pomp, save a foolish gem or two, and free
In dream, came join the peasants o'er the sea.)
Look they too happy, too tricked out? Confess
There is such niggard stock of happiness
To share, that, do one's uttermost, dear wretch,
One labours ineffectually to stretch
It o'er you, so that mother and children, both
May equitably flaunt the sumpter-cloth!
Divide the robe yet farther: be content
With seeing just a score pre-eminent
Through shreds of it, acknowledged happy wights,
Engrossing what should furnish all, by rights!
For, these in evidence, you clearlier claim
A like garb for the rest,—grace all, the same
As these my peasants. I ask youth and strength
And health for each of you, not more—at length
Grown wise, who asked at home that the whole race
Might add the spirit's to the body's grace,
And all be dizened out as chiefs and bards.
But in this magic weather one discards
Much old requirement. Venice seems a type
Of Life,—'twixt blue and blue extends, a stripe,
As Life, the somewhat, hangs 'twixt nought and nought:

'T is Venice, and 't is Life—as good you sought
To spare me the Piazza's slippery stone
Or keep me to the unchoked canals alone,
As hinder Life, the evil with the good
Which make up Living, rightly understood.
Only, do finish something! Peasants, queens,
Take them, made happy by whatever means,
Parade them for the common credit, vouch
That a luckless residue, we send to crouch
In corners out of sight, was just as framed
For happiness, its portion might have claimed
As well, and so, obtaining joy, had stalked
Fastuous as any!—such my project, baulked
Already; I hardly venture to adjust
The first rags, when you find me. To mistrust
Me!—nor unreasonably. You, no doubt,
Have the true knack of tiring suitors out
With those thin lips on tremble, lashless eyes
Inveterately tear-shot—there, be wise,
Mistress of mine, there, there, as if I meant
You insult!—shall your friend (not slave) be shent
For speaking home? Beside, care-bit erased
Broken-up beauties ever took my taste
Supremely; and I love you more, far more
Than her I looked should foot Life's temple-floor.
Years ago, leagues at distance, when and where
A whisper came, "Let others seek!—thy care
"Is found, thy life's provision; if thy race
"Should be thy mistress, and into one face

"The many faces crowd?" Ah, had I, judge,
Or no, your secret? Rough apparel—grudge
All ornaments save tag or tassel worn
To hint we are not thoroughly forlorn—
Slouch bonnet, unloop mantle, careless go
Alone (that 's saddest, but it must be so)
Through Venice, sing now and now glance aside,
Aught desultory or undignified,—
Then, ravishingest lady, will you pass
Or not each formidable group, the mass
Before the Basilic (that feast gone by,
God's great day of the Corpus Domini)
And, wistfully foregoing proper men,
Come timid up to me for alms? And then
The luxury to hesitate, feign do
Some unexampled grace!—when, whom but you
Dare I bestow your own upon? And hear
Further before you say, it is to sneer
I call you ravishing; for I regret
Little that she, whose early foot was set
Forth as she 'd plant it on a pedestal,
Now, i' the silent city, seems to fall
Toward me—no wreath, only a lip's unrest
To quiet, surcharged eyelids to be pressed
Dry of their tears upon my bosom. Strange
Such sad chance should produce in thee such change,
My love! Warped souls and bodies! yet God spoke
Of right-hand, foot and eye—selects our yoke,
Sordello, as your poetship may find!

So, sleep upon my shoulder, child, nor mind
Their foolish talk ; we 'll manage reinstate
Your old worth ; ask moreover, when they prate
Of evil men past hope, " Don't each contrive,
" Despite the evil you abuse, to live ?—
" Keeping, each losel, through a maze of lies,
" His own conceit of truth ? to which he hies
" By obscure windings, tortuous, if you will,
" But to himself not inaccessible ;
" He sees truth, and his lies are for the crowd
" Who cannot see ; some fancied right allowed
" His vilest wrong, empowered the fellow clutch
" One pleasure from a multitude of such
" Denied him." Then assert, " All men appear
" To think all better than themselves, by here
" Trusting a crowd they wrong ; but really," say,
" All men think all men stupider than they,
" Since, save themselves, no other comprehends
" The complicated scheme to make amends
" —Evil, the scheme by which, thro' Ignorance,
" Good labours to exist." A slight advance,—
Merely to find the sickness you die through,
And nought beside ! but if one can't eschew
One's portion in the common lot, at least
One can avoid an ignorance increased
Tenfold by dealing out hint after hint
How nought were like dispensing without stint
The water of life—so easy to dispense
Beside, when one has probed the centre whence

Commotion's born—could tell you of it all!
"—Meantime, just meditate my madrigal
"O' the mugwort that conceals a dewdrop safe!"
What, dullard? we and you in smothery chafe,
Babes, baldheads, stumbled thus far into Zin
The Horrid, getting neither out nor in,
A hungry sun above us, sands that bung
Our throats,—each dromedary lolls a tongue,
Each camel churns a sick and frothy chap,
And you, 'twixt tales of Potiphar's mishap,
And sonnets on the earliest ass that spoke,
—Remark, you wonder any one needs choke
With founts about! Potsherd him, Gibeonites!
While awkwardly enough your Moses smites
The rock, though he forego his Promised Land
Thereby, have Satan claim his carcass, and
Figure as Metaphysic Poet . . . ah,
Mark ye the dim first oozings? Meribah!
Then, quaffing at the fount my courage gained,
Recall—not that I prompt ye—who explained . . .
"Presumptuous!" interrupts one. You, not I
'T is, brother, marvel at and magnify
Such office: "office," quotha? can we get
To the beginning of the office yet?
What do we here? simply experiment
Each on the other's power and its intent
When elsewhere tasked,—if this of mine were trucked
For yours to either's good,—we watch construct,
In short, an engine: with a finished one,

What it can do, is all,—nought, how 't is done.
But this of ours yet in probation, dusk
A kernel of strange wheelwork through its husk
Grows into shape by quarters and by halves;
Remark this tooth's spring, wonder what that valve's
Fall bodes, presume each faculty's device,
Make out each other more or less precise—
The scope of the whole engine 's to be proved;
We die: which means to say, the whole 's removed,
Dismounted wheel by wheel, this complex gin,—
To be set up anew elsewhere, begin
A task indeed, but with a clearer clime
Than the murk lodgment of our building-time.
And then, I grant you, it behoves forget
How 't is done—all that must amuse us yet
So long: and, while you turn upon your heel,
Pray that I be not busy slitting steel
Or shredding brass, camped on some virgin shore
Under a cluster of fresh stars, before
I name a tithe o' the wheels I trust to do!
So occupied, then, are we: hitherto,
At present, and a weary while to come,
The office of ourselves,—nor blind nor dumb,
And seeing somewhat of man's state,—has been,
For the worst of us, to say they so have seen;
For the better, what it was they saw; the best
Impart the gift of seeing to the rest:
"So that I glance," says such an one, "around,
"And there 's no face but I can read profound

" Disclosures in; this stands for hope, that—fear,
" And for a speech, a deed in proof, look here!
" ' Stoop, else the strings of blossom, where the nuts
" ' O'erarch, will blind thee! Said I not? She shut
" ' Both eyes this time, so close the hazels meet!
" ' Thus, prisoned in the Piombi, I repeat
" ' Events one rove occasioned, o'er and o'er,
" ' Putting 'twixt me and madness evermore
" ' Thy sweet shape, Zanze! Therefore stoop!'
" ' That's truth!'
" (Adjudge you) 'the incarcerated youth
" ' Would say that!'
" Youth? Plara the bard? Set down
" That Plara spent his youth in a grim town
" Whose cramped ill-featured streets huddled about
" The minster for protection, never out
" Of its black belfry's shade and its bells' roar.
" The brighter shone the suburb,—all the more
" Ugly and absolute that shade's reproof
" Of any chance escape of joy,—some roof,
" Taller than they, allowed the rest detect,—
" Before the sole permitted laugh (suspect
" Who could, 't was meant for laughter, that ploughed cheek's
" Repulsive gleam!) when the sun stopped both peaks
" Of the cleft belfry like a fiery wedge,
" Then sunk, a huge flame on its socket edge,
" With leavings on the grey glass oriel-pane
" Ghastly some minutes more. No fear of rain—

"The minster minded that! in heaps the dust
"Lay everywhere. This town, the minster's trust,
"Held Plara; who, its denizen, bade hail
"In twice twelve sonnets, Tempe's dewy vale."
"'Exact the town, the minster and the street!'"
"As all mirth triumphs, sadness means defeat:
"Lust triumphs and is gay, Love's triumphed o'er
"And sad: but Lucio's sad. I said before,
"Love's sad, not Lucio; one who loves may be
"As gay his love has leave to hope, as he
"Downcast that lusts' desire escapes the springe:
"'T is of the mood itself I speak, what tinge
"Determines it, else colourless,—or mirth,
"Or melancholy, as from heaven or earth."
"'Ay, that's the variation's gist!' Indeed?
"Thus far advanced in safety then, proceed!
"And having seen too what I saw, be bold
"And next encounter what I do behold
"(That's sure) but bid you take on trust!"

Attack

The use and purpose of such sights? Alack,
Not so unwisely does the crowd dispense
On Salinguerras praise in preference
To the Sordellos: men of action, these!
Who, seeing just as little as you please,
Yet turn that little to account,—engage
With, do not gaze at,—carry on, a stage,
The work o' the world, not merely make report
The work existed ere their day! In short,

When at some future no-time a brave band
Sees, using what it sees, then shake my hand
In heaven, my brother! Meanwhile where 's the hurt
Of keeping the Makers-see on the alert,
At whose defection mortals stare aghast
As though heaven's bounteous windows were slammed fast
Incontinent? Whereas all you, beneath,
Should scowl at, curse them, bruise lips, break their teeth
Who ply the pullies, for neglecting you:
And therefore have I moulded, made anew
A Man, and give him to be turned and tried,
Be angry with or pleased at. On your side,
Have ye times, places, actors of your own?
Try them upon Sordello when full-grown,
And then—ah then! If Hercules first parched
His foot in Egypt only to be marched
A sacrifice for Jove with pomp to suit,
What chance have I? The demigod was mute
Till, at the altar, where time out of mind,
Such guests became oblations, chaplets twined
His forehead long enough, and he began
Slaying the slayers, nor escaped a man.
Take not affront, my gentle audience! whom
No Hercules shall make his hecatomb,
Believe, nor from his brows your chaplet rend—
That 's your kind suffrage, yours, my patron-friend,
Whose great verse blares unintermittent on
Like your own trumpeter at Marathon,—

You who, Platæas and Salamis being scant,
Put up with Ætna for a stimulant—
And did well, I acknowledged, as he loomed
Over the midland sea last month, presumed
Long, lay demolished in the blazing West
At eve, while towards him tilting cloudlets pressed
Like Persian ships at Salamis. Friend, wear
A crest proud as desert while I declare
Had I a flawless ruby fit to wring
Tears of its colour from that painted king
Who lost it, I would, for that smile which went
To my heart, fling it in the sea, content,
Wearing your verse in place, an amulet
Sovereign against all passion, wear and fret!
My English Eyebright,[x] if you are not glad
That, as I stopped my task awhile, the sad
Dishevelled form, wherein I put mankind
To come at times and keep my pact in mind,
Renewed me,—hear no crickets in the hedge,
Nor let a glowworm spot the river's edge
At home, and may the summer showers gush
Without a warning from the missel thrush!
So, to our business, now—the fate of such
As find our common nature—overmuch
Despised because restricted and unfit
To bear the burthen they impose on it—
Cling when they would discard it; craving strength
To leap from the allotted world, at length
They do leap,—flounder on without a term,

B. admits that the story sounds dull; but suggests the possibility of its containing an agreeable surprise, an amusing anecdote to this effect concludes the chapter

Each a god's germ, doomed to remain a germ
In unexpanded infancy, unless . . .
But that 's the story—dull enough, confess !
There might be fitter subjects to allure ; 985
Still, neither misconceive my portraiture
Nor undervalue its adornments quaint :
What seems a fiend perchance may prove a saint.
Ponder a story, ancient pens transmit,
Then say if you condemn me or acquit. 990
John, the Beloved, banished Antioch
For Patmos, bade collectively his flock
Farewell, but set apart the closing eve
To comfort those his exile most would grieve,
He knew : a touching spectacle, that house 995
In motion to receive him ! Xanthus' spouse
You missed, made panther's meat a month since ; but
Xanthus himself (his nephew 't was, they shut
'Twixt boards and sawed asunder) Polycarp,
Soft Charicle, next year no wheel could warp 1000
To swear by Cæsar's fortune, with the rest
Were ranged ; thro' whom the grey disciple pressed,
Busily blessing right and left, just stopped
To pat one infant's curls, the hangman cropped
Soon after, reached the portal. On its hinge 1005
The door turns and he enters : what quick twinge
Ruins the smiling mouth, those wide eyes fix
Whereon, why, like some spectral candlestick's
Branch, the disciple's arms ? Dead swooned he, woke
Anon, heaved sigh, made shift to gasp, heart-broke, 1010

"Get thee behind me, Satan! Have I toiled
"To no more purpose? Is the gospel foiled
"Here too, and o'er my son's, my Xanthus' hearth,
"Portrayed with sooty garb and features swarth—
"Ah Xanthus, am I to thy roof beguiled
"To see the—the—the Devil domiciled?"
Whereto sobbed Xanthus, "Father, 't is yourself
"Installed, a limning which our utmost pelf
"Went to procure against to-morrow's loss;
"And that 's no twy-prong, but a pastoral cross,
"You 're painted with!"
His puckered brows unfold—
And you shall hear Sordello's story told.

BOOK THE FOURTH.

MEN SUFFERED MUCH,

MEANTIME Ferrara lay in rueful case ;
The lady-city, for whose sole embrace
Her pair of suitors struggled, felt their arms
A brawny mischief to the fragile charms
They tugged for—one discovering that to twist
Her tresses twice or thrice about his wrist
Secured a point of vantage—one, how best
He'd parry that by planting in her breast
His elbow spike—each party too intent
For noticing, howe'er the battle went,
The conqueror would but have a corpse to kiss.
" May Boniface be duly damned for this ! "
—Howled some old Ghibellin, as up he turned,
From the wet heap of rubbish where they burned
His house, a little skull with dazzling teeth :
" A boon, sweet Christ—let Salinguerra seethe
" In hell for ever, Christ, and let myself
" Be there to laugh at him ! "—moaned some young Guelf
Stumbling upon a shrivelled hand nailed fast
To the charred lintel of the doorway, last
His father stood within to bid him speed.
The thoroughfares were overrun with weed
—Docks, quitchgrass, loathly mallows no man plants.

The stranger, none of its inhabitants
Crept out of doors to taste fresh air again,
And ask the purpose of a splendid train
Admitted on a morning; every town
Of the East League was come by envoy down
To treat for Richard's ransom: here you saw
The Vicentine, here snowy oxen draw
The Paduan carroch, its vermilion cross
On its white field. A-tiptoe o'er the fosse
Looked Legate Montelungo wistfully
After the flock of steeples he might spy
In Este's time, gone (doubts he) long ago
To mend the ramparts: sure the laggards know
The Pope 's as good as here! They paced the streets
More soberly. At last, "Taurello greets
"The League," announced a pursuivant,—"will match
"Its courtesy, and labours to dispatch
"At earliest Tito, Friedrich's Pretor, sent
"On pressing matters from his post at Trent,
"With Mainard Count of Tyrol,—simply waits
"Their going to receive the delegates."
"Tito!" Our delegates exchanged a glance,
And, keeping the main way, admired askance
The lazy engines of outlandish birth,
Couched like a king each on its bank of earth—
Arbalist, manganel and catapult;
While stationed by, as waiting a result,
Lean silent gangs of mercenaries ceased
Working to watch the strangers. "This, at least,

" Were better spared; he scarce presumes gainsay
" The League's decision! Get our friend away
" And profit for the future: how else teach
" Fools 't is not safe to stray within claw's reach
" Ere Salinguerra's final gasp be blown?
" Those mere convulsive scratches find the bone.
" Who bade him bloody the spent osprey's nare?"
The carrochs halted in the public square.
Pennons of every blazon once a-flaunt,
Men prattled, freelier that the crested gaunt
White ostrich with a horse-shoe in her beak
" Was missing, and whoever chose might speak
" Ecelin" boldly out: so,—" Ecelin
" Needed his wife to swallow half the sin
" And sickens by himself: the devil's whelp,
" He styles his son, dwindles away, no help
" From conserves, your fine triple-curded froth
" Of virgin's blood, your Venice viper-broth—
" Eh? Jubilate!"—" Peace! no little word
" You utter here that 's not distinctly heard
" Up at Oliero: he was absent sick
" When we besieged Bassano—who, i' the thick
" O' the work, perceived the progress Azzo made,
" Like Ecelin, through his witch Adelaide?
" She managed it so well that, night by night,
" At their bed-foot stood up a soldier-sprite,
" First fresh, pale by-and-by without a wound,
" And, when it came with eyes filmed as in swound,
" They knew the place was taken."—" Ominous

" That Ghibellins should get what cautelous
" Old Redbeard sought from Azzo's sire to wrench
" Vainly ; Saint George contrived his town a trench
" O' the marshes, an impermeable bar."
" —Young Ecelin is meant the tutelar
" Of Padua, rather ; veins embrace upon
" His hand like Brenta and Bacchiglion."
What now ?—" The founts ! God's bread, touch not a plank !
" A crawling hell of carrion—every tank
" Choke full !—found out just now to Cino's cost—
" The same who gave Taurello up for lost,
" And, making no account of fortune's freaks,
" Refused to budge from Padua then, but sneaks
" Back now with Concorezzi—'faith ! they drag
" Their carroch to San Vitale, plant the flag
" On his own palace, so adroitly razed
" He knew it not ; a sort of Guelf folk gazed
" And laughed apart ; Cino disliked their air—
" Must pluck up spirit, show he does not care—
" Seats himself on the tank's edge—will begin
" To hum, *za, za, Cavaler Ecelin*—
" A silence ; he gets warmer, clinks to chime,
" Now both feet plough the ground, deeper each time,
" At last, *za, za* and up with a fierce kick
" Comes his own mother's face caught by the thick
" Grey hair about his spur !"
Which means, they lift
The covering, Salinguerra made a shift

To stretch upon the truth; as well avoid
Further disclosures; leave them thus employed.
Our dropping Autumn morning clears apace,
And poor Ferrara puts a softened face
On her misfortunes. Let us scale this tall
Huge foursquare line of red brick garden-wall
Bastioned within by trees of every sort
On three sides, slender, spreading, long and short;
Each grew as it contrived, the poplar ramped,
The fig-tree reared itself,—but stark and cramped,
Made fools of, like tamed lions: whence, on the edge,
Running 'twixt trunk and trunk to smooth one ledge
Of shade, were shrubs inserted, warp and woof,
Which smothered up that variance. Scale the roof
Of solid tops, and o'er the slope you slide
Down to a grassy space level and wide,
Here and there dotted with a tree, but trees
Of rarer leaf, each foreigner at ease,
Set by itself: and in the centre spreads,
Borne upon three uneasy leopards' heads,
A laver, broad and shallow, one bright spirt
Of water bubbles in. The walls begirt
With trees leave off on either hand; pursue
Your path along a wondrous avenue
Those walls abut on, heaped of gleamy stone,
With aloes leering everywhere, grey-grown
From many a Moorish summer: how they wind
Out of the fissures! likelier to bind
The building than those rusted cramps which drop

Already in the eating sunshine. Stop,
You fleeting shapes above there! Ah, the pride
Or else despair of the whole country-side!
A range of statues, swarming o'er with wasps,
God, goddess, woman, man, the Greek rough-rasps
In crumbling Naples marble—meant to look
Like those Messina marbles Constance took
Delight in, or Taurello's self conveyed
To Mantua for his mistress, Adelaide,
A certain font with caryatides
Since cloistered at Goito; only, these
Are up and doing, not abashed, a troop
Able to right themselves—who see you, stoop
O' the instant after you their arms! Unplucked
By this or that, you pass; for they conduct
To terrace raised on terrace, and, between,
Creatures of brighter mould and braver mien
Than any yet, the choicest of the Isle
No doubt. Here, left a sullen breathing-while,
Up-gathered on himself the Fighter stood
For his last fight, and, wiping treacherous blood
Out of the eyelids just held ope beneath
Those shading fingers in their iron sheath,
Steadied his strengths amid the buz and stir
Of the dusk hideous amphitheatre
At the announcement of his over-match
To wind the day's diversion up, dispatch
The pertinacious Gaul: while, limbs one heap,
The Slave, no breath in her round mouth, watched leap

Dart after dart forth, as her hero's car
Clove dizzily the solid of the war
—Let coil about his knees for pride in him.
We reach the farthest terrace, and the grim
San Pietro Palace stops us.
Such the state
Of Salinguerra's plan to emulate
Sicilian marvels, that his girlish wife
Retrude still might lead her ancient life
In her new home: whereat enlarged so much
Neighbours upon the novel princely touch
He took,—who here imprisons Boniface.
Here must the Envoys come to sue for grace;
And here, emerging from the labyrinth
Below, Sordello paused beside the plinth
Of the door-pillar.
He had really left
Verona for the cornfields (a poor theft
From the morass) where Este's camp was made;
The Envoys' march, the Legate's cavalcade—
All had been seen by him, but scarce as when,—
Eager for cause to stand aloof from men
At every point save the fantastic tie
Acknowledged in his boyish sophistry,—
He made account of such. A crowd,—he meant
To task the whole of it; each part's intent
Concerned him therefore: and, the more he pried,
The less became Sordello satisfied
With his own figure at the moment. Sought

He respite from his task? Descried he aught
Novel in the anticipated sight
Of all these livers upon all delight?
This phalanx, as of myriad points combined,
Whereby he still had imaged the mankind
His youth was passed in dreams of rivalling,
His age—in plans to prove at least such thing
Had been so dreamed,—which now he must impress
With his own will, effect a happiness
By theirs,—supply a body to his soul
Thence, and become eventually whole
With them as he had hoped to be without—
Made these the mankind he once raved about?
Because a few of them were notable,
Should all be figured worthy note? As well
Expect to find Taurello's triple line
Of trees a single and prodigious pine.
Real pines rose here and there; but, close among,
Thrust into and mixed up with pines, a throng
Of shrubs, he saw,—a nameless common sort
O'erpast in dreams, left out of the report
And hurried into corners, or at best
Admitted to be fancied like the rest.
Reckon that morning's proper chiefs—how few!
And yet the people grew, the people grew,
Grew ever, as if the many there indeed,
More left behind and most who should succeed,—
Simply in virtue of their mouths and eyes,
Petty enjoyments and huge miseries,—

Mingled with, and made veritably great
Those chiefs: he overlooked not Mainard's state
Nor Concorezzi's station, but instead
Of stopping there, each dwindled to be head
Of infinite and absent Tyrolese
Or Paduans; startling all the more, that these
Seemed passive and disposed of, uncared for,
Yet doubtless on the whole (like Eglamor)
Smiling; for if a wealthy man decays
And out of store of robes must wear, all days,
One tattered suit, alike in sun and shade,
'T is commonly some tarnished gay brocade
Fit for a feast-night's flourish and no more:
Nor otherwise poor Misery from her store
Of looks is fain upgather, keep unfurled
For common wear as she goes through the world,
The faint remainder of some worn-out smile
Meant for a feast-night's service merely. While
Crowd upon crowd rose on Sordello thus,—
(Crowds no way interfering to discuss,
Much less dispute, life's joys with one employed
In envying them,—or, if they aught enjoyed,
Where lingered something indefinable
In every look and tone, the mirth as well
As woe, that fixed at once his estimate
Of the result, their good or bad estate)—
Old memories returned with new effect:
And the new body, ere he could suspect,
Cohered, mankind and he were really fused,

The new self seemed impatient to be used
By him, but utterly another way
Than that anticipated: strange to say,
They were too much below him, more in thrall
Than he, the adjunct than the principal.
What booted scattered units?—here a mind
And there, which might repay his own to find,
And stamp, and use?—a few, howe'er august,
If all the rest were grovelling in the dust?
No: first a mighty equilibrium, sure,
Should he establish, privilege procure
For all, the few had long possessed! He felt
An error, an exceeding error melt—
While he was occupied with Mantuan chants,
Behoved him think of men, and take their wants,
Such as he now distinguished every side,
As his own want which might be satisfied,—
And, after that, think of rare qualities
Of his own soul demanding exercise.
It followed naturally, through no claim
On their part, which made virtue of the aim
At serving them, on his,—that, past retrieve,
He felt now in their toils, theirs—nor could leave
Wonder how, in the eagerness to rule,
Impress his will on mankind, he (the fool!)
Had never even entertained the thought
That this his last arrangement might be fraught
With incidental good to them as well,
And that mankind's delight would help to swell

Sordello sin maiden Ausland,

His own. So, if he sighed, as formerly
Because the merry time of life must fleet,
'T was deeplier now,—for could the crowds repeat
Their poor experiences? His hand that shook
Was twice to be deplored. "The Legate, look!
"With eyes, like fresh-blown thrush-eggs on a thread,
"Faint-blue and loosely floating in his head,
"Large tongue, moist open mouth; and this long while
"That owner of the idiotic smile
"Serves them!"
He fortunately saw in time
His fault however, and since the office prime
Includes the secondary—best accept
Both offices; Taurello, its adept,
Could teach him the preparatory one,
And how to do what he had fancied done
Long previously, ere take the greater task.
How render first these people happy? Ask
The people's friends: for there must be one good,
One way to it—the Cause!—he understood
The meaning now of Palma; why the jar
Else, the ado, the trouble wide and far
Of Guelfs and Ghibellins, the Lombard's hope
And Rome's despair?—'twixt Emperor and Pope
The confused shifting sort of Eden tale—
Still hardihood recurring, still to fail—
That foreign interloping fiend, this free
And native overbrooding deity—
Yet a dire fascination o'er the palms

The Kaiser ruined, troubling even the calms
Of paradise—or, on the other hand,
The Pontiff, as the Kaisers understand,
One snake-like cursed of God to love the ground,
Whose heavy length breaks in the noon profound
Some saving tree—which needs the Kaiser, dressed
As the dislodging angel of that pest,
Then—yet that pest bedropped, flat head, full fold,
With coruscating dower of dyes. "Behold
"The secret, so to speak, and master-spring
"Of the contest!—which of the two Powers shall bring
"Men good—perchance the most good—ay, it may
"Be that!—the question, which best knows the way."
And hereupon Count Mainard strutted past
Out of San Pietro; never seemed the last
Of archers, slingers: and our friend began
To recollect strange modes of serving man
Arbalist, catapult, brake, manganel,
And more. "This way of theirs may,—who can tell?—
"Need perfecting," said he: "let all be solved
"At once! Taurello 't is, the task devolved
"On late—confront Taurello!"
And at last
He did confront him. Scarcely an hour past
When forth Sordello came, older by years
Than at his entry. Unexampled fears
Oppressed him, and he staggered off, blind, mute
And deaf, like some fresh-mutilated brute,
Into Ferrara—not the empty town

That morning witnessed: he went up and down
Streets whence the veil had been stripped shred by shred,
So that, in place of huddling with their dead
Indoors, to answer Salinguerra's ends,
Its folk made shift to crawl forth, sit like friends
With any one. A woman gave him choice
Of her two daughters, the infantile voice
Or the dimpled knee, for half a chain, his throat
Was clasped with; but an archer knew the coat—
Its blue cross and eight lilies,—bade beware
One dogging him in concert with the pair
Though thrumming on the sleeve that hid his knife.
Night set in early, autumn dews were rife,
They kindled great fires while the Leaguers' mass
Began at every carroch—he must pass
Between the kneeling people. Presently
The carroch of Verona caught his eye
With purple trappings; silently he bent
Over its fire, when voices violent
Began, "Affirm not whom the youth was like
"That, striking from the porch, I did not strike
"Again: I too have chestnut hair; my kin
"Hate Azzo and stand up for Ecelin.
"Here, minstrel, drive bad thoughts away! Sing! Take
"My glove for guerdon!" And for that man's sake
He turned: "A song of Eglamor's!"—scarce named,
When, "Our Sordello's rather!"—all exclaimed;
"Is not Sordello famousest for rhyme?"
He had been happy to deny, this time,—

Profess as heretofore the aching head
And failing heart,—suspect that in his stead
Some true Apollo had the charge of them,
Was champion to reward or to condemn,
So his intolerable risk might shift
Or share itself; but Naddo's precious gift
Of gifts, he owned, be certain! At the close—
"I made that," said he to a youth who rose
As if to hear: 't was Palma through the band
Conducted him in silence by her hand.

Back now for Salinguerra. Tito of Trent
Gave place to Palma and her friend; who went
In turn at Montelungo's visit—one
After the other were they come and gone,—
These spokesmen for the Kaiser and the Pope,
This incarnation of the People's hope,
Sordello,—all the say of each was said
And Salinguerra sat, himself instead
Of these to talk with, lingered musing yet.
'T was a drear vast presence-chamber roughly set
In order for the morning's use; full face,
The Kaiser's ominous sign-mark had first place,
The crowned grim twy-necked eagle, coarsely-blacked
With ochre on the naked wall; nor lacked
Romano's green and yellow either side;
But the new token Tito brought had tried
The Legate's patience,—nay, if Palma knew
What Salinguerra almost meant to do,
Until the sight of her restored his lip

A certain half-smile, three months' chieftainship
Had banished! Afterward, the Legate found
No change in him, nor asked what badge he wound
And unwound carelessly. Now sat the Chief
Silent as when our couple left, whose brief
Encounter wrought so opportune effect
In thoughts he summoned not, nor would reject.
Though time 't was now if ever, to pause—fix
On any sort of ending: wiles and tricks
Exhausted, judge! his charge, the crazy town,
Just managed to be hindered crashing down—
His last sound troops ranged—care observed to post
His best of the maimed soldiers innermost—
So much was plain enough, but somehow struck
Him not before. And now with this strange luck
Of Tito's news, rewarding his address
So well, what thought he of?—how the success
With Friedrich's rescript there, would either hush
Old Ecelin's scruples, bring the manly flush
To his young son's white cheek, or, last, exempt
Himself from telling what there was to tempt?
No: that this minstrel was Romano's last
Servant—himself the first! Could he contrast
The whole!—that minstrel's thirty years just spent
In doing nought, their notablest event
This morning's journey hither, as I told—
Who yet was lean, outworn and really old,
A stammering awkward man that scarce dared raise
His eye before the magisterial gaze—

And Salinguerra with his fears and hopes
Of sixty years, his Emperors and Popes,
Cares and contrivances, yet, you would say,
'T was a youth nonchalantly looked away
Through the embrasure northward o'er the sick
Expostulating trees—so agile, quick
And graceful turned the head on the broad chest
Encased in pliant steel, his constant vest,
Whence split the sun off in a spray of fire
Across the room ; and, loosened of its tire
Of steel, that head let breathe the comely brown
Large massive locks discoloured as if a crown
Encircled them, so frayed the basnet where
A sharp white line divided clean the hair ;
Glossy above, glossy below, it swept
Curling and fine about a brow thus kept
Calm, laid coat upon coat, marble and sound :
This was the mystic mark the Tuscan found,
Mused of, turned over books about. Square-faced,
No lion more ; two vivid eyes, enchased
In hollows filled with many a shade and streak
Settling from the bold nose and bearded cheek.
Nor might the half-smile reach them that deformed
A lip supremely perfect else—unwarmed,
Unwidened, less or more ; indifferent
Whether on trees or men his thoughts were bent,
Thoughts rarely, after all, in trim and train
As now a period was fulfilled again :
Of such a series made his life, compressed

In each, one story serving for the rest—
How his life-streams rolling arrived at last
At the barrier, whence, were it once overpast,
They would emerge, a river to the end,—
Gathered themselves up, paused, bade fate befriend,
Took the leap, hung a minute at the height,
Then fell back to oblivion infinite:
Therefore he smiled. Beyond stretched garden-grounds
Where late the adversary, breaking bounds,
Had gained him an occasion, That above,
That eagle, testified he could improve
Effectually. The Kaiser's symbol lay
Beside his rescript, a new badge by way
Of baldric; while,—another thing that marred
Alike emprise, achievement and reward,—
Ecelin's missive was conspicuous too.

What past life did those flying thoughts pursue?
As his, few names in Mantua half so old;
But at Ferrara, where his sires enrolled
It latterly, the Adelardi spared
No pains to rival them: both factions shared
Ferrara, so that, counted out, 't would yield
A product very like the city's shield,
Half black and white, or Ghibellin and Guelf,
As after Salinguerra styled himself
And Este who, till Marchesalla died,
(Last of the Adelardi)—never tried
His fortune there: with Marchesalla's child
Would pass,—could Blacks and Whites be reconciled,

And young Taurello wed Linguetta,—wealth
And sway to a sole grasp. Each treats by stealth
Already: when the Guelfs, the Ravennese
Arrive, assault the Pietro quarter, seize
Linguetta, and are gone! Men's first dismay
Abated somewhat, hurries down, to lay
The after indignation, Boniface,
This Richard's father. "Learn the full disgrace
"Averted, ere you blame us Guelfs, who rate
"Your Salinguerra, your sole potentate
"That might have been, 'mongst Este's valvassors—
"Ay, Azzo's—who, not privy to, abhors
"Our step; but we were zealous." Azzo 's then
To do with! Straight a meeting of old men:
"Old Salinguerra dead, his heir a boy,
"What if we change our ruler and decoy
"The Lombard Eagle of the azure sphere,
"With Italy to build in, fix him here,
"Settle the city's troubles in a trice?
"For private wrong, let public good suffice!"
In fine, young Salinguerra's staunchest friends
Talked of the townsmen making him amends,
Gave him a goshawk, and affirmed there was
Rare sport, one morning, over the green grass
A mile or so. He sauntered through the plain,
Was restless, fell to thinking, turned again
In time for Azzo's entry with the bride;
Count Boniface rode smirking at their side:
"She brings him half Ferrara," whispers flew,

"And all Ancona! If the stripling knew!"
Anon the stripling was in Sicily
Where Heinrich ruled in right of Constance; he
Was gracious nor his guest incapable;
Each understood the other. So it fell,
One Spring, when Azzo, thoroughly at ease,
Had near forgotten by what precise degrees
He crept at first to such a downy seat,
The Count trudged over in a special heat
To bid him of God's love dislodge from each
Of Salinguerra's palaces,—a breach
Might yawn else, not so readily to shut,
For who was just arrived at Mantua but
The youngster, sword on thigh and tuft on chin,
With tokens for Celano, Ecelin,
Pistore, and the like! Next news,—no whit
Do any of Ferrara's domes befit
His wife of Heinrich's very blood: a band
Of foreigners assemble, understand
Garden-constructing, level and surround,
Build up and bury in. A last news crowned
The consternation: since his infant's birth,
He only waits they end his wondrous girth
Of trees that link San Pietro with Tomà,
To visit Mantua. When the Podestà
Ecelin, at Vicenza, called his friend
Taurello thither, what could be their end
But to restore the Ghibellins' late Head,
The Kaiser helping? He with most to dread

From vengeance and reprisal, Azzo, there
With Boniface beforehand, as aware
Of plots in progress, gave alarm, expelled
Both plotters: but the Guelfs in triumph yelled
Too hastily. The burning and the flight,
And how Taurello, occupied that night
With Ecelin, lost wife and son, I told:
—Not how he bore the blow, retained his hold,
Got friends safe through, left enemies the worst
O' the fray, and hardly seemed to care at first—
But afterward men heard not constantly
Of Salinguerra's House so sure to be!
Though Azzo simply gained by the event
A shifting of his plagues—the first, content
To fall behind the second and estrange
So far his nature, suffer such a change
That in Romano sought he wife and child
And for Romano's sake seemed reconciled
To losing individual life, which shrunk
As the other prospered—mortised in his trunk;
Like a dwarf palm which wanton Arabs foil
Of bearing its own proper wine and oil,
By grafting into it the stranger-vine,
Which sucks its heart out, sly and serpentine,
Till forth one vine-palm feathers to the root,
And red drops moisten the insipid fruit.
Once Adelaide set on,—the subtle mate
Of the weak soldier, urged to emulate
The Church's valiant women deed for deed,

And paragon her namesake, win the meed
Of the great Matilda,—soon they overbore
The rest of Lombardy,—not as before
By an instinctive truculence, but patched
The Kaiser's strategy until it matched
The Pontiff's, sought old ends by novel means.
" Only, why is it Salinguerra screens
" Himself behind Romano?—him we bade
" Enjoy our shine i' the front, not seek the shade!"
—Asked Heinrich, somewhat of the tardiest
To comprehend. Nor Philip acquiesced
At once in the arrangement; reasoned, plied
His friend with offers of another bride,
A statelier function—fruitlessly: 't was plain
Taurello through some weakness must remain
Obscure. And Otho, free to judge of both,
—Ecelin the unready, harsh and loth,
And this more plausible and facile wight
With every point a-sparkle—chose the right,
Admiring how his predecessors harped
On the wrong man: "thus," quoth he, "wits are warped
" By outsides!" Carelessly, meanwhile, his life
Suffered its many turns of peace and strife
In many lands—you hardly could surprise
The man; who shamed Sordello (recognise!)
In this as much beside, that, unconcerned
What qualities were natural or earned,
With no ideal of graces, as they came
He took them, singularly well the same—

Speaking the Greek's own language, just because
Your Greek eludes you, leave the least to flaws
In contracts with him; while, since Arab lore
Holds the stars' secret—take one trouble more
And master it! 'T is done, and now deter
Who may the Tuscan, once Jove trined for her,
From Friedrich's path!—Friedrich, whose pilgrimage
The same man puts aside, whom he'll engage
To leave next year John Brienne in the lurch,
Come to Bassano, see Saint Francis' church
And judge of Guido the Bolognian's piece
Which, lend Taurello credit, rivals Greece—
Angels, with aureoles like golden quoits
Pitched home, applauding Ecelin's exploits.
For elegance, he strung the angelot,
Made rhymes thereto; for prowess, clove he not
Tiso, last siege, from crest to crupper? Why
Detail you thus a varied mastery
But to show how Taurello, on the watch
For men, to read their hearts and thereby catch
Their capabilities and purposes,
Displayed himself so far as displayed these:
While our Sordello only cared to know
About men as a means whereby he'd show
Himself, and men had much or little worth
According as they kept in or drew forth
That self; the other's choicest instruments
Surmised him shallow.

Meantime, malcontents

Dropped off, town after town grew wiser. "How
"Change the world's face?" asked people; "as 't is now
"It has been, will be ever: very fine
"Subjecting things profane to things divine,
"In talk! This contumacy will fatigue
"The vigilance of Este and the League!
"The Ghibellins gain on us!"—as it happed.
Old Azzo and old Boniface, entrapped
By Ponte Alto, both in one month's space
Slept at Verona: either left a brace
Of sons—but, three years after, either's pair
Lost Guglielm and Aldobrand its heir:
Azzo remained and Richard—all the stay
Of Este and Saint Boniface, at bay
As 't were. Then, either Ecelin grew old
Or his brain altered—not of the proper mould
For new appliances—his old palm-stock
Endured no influx of strange strengths. He 'd rock
As in a drunkenness, or chuckle low
As proud of the completeness of his woe,
Then weep real tears;—now make some mad onslaught
On Este, heedless of the lesson taught
So painfully,—now cringe for peace, sue peace
At price of past gain, bar of fresh increase
To the fortunes of Romano. Up at last
Rose Este, down Romano sank as fast.
And men remarked these freaks of peace and war
Happened while Salinguerra was afar:
Whence every friend besought him, all in vain,

To use his old adherent's wits again.
Not he !—" who had advisers in his sons,
" Could plot himself, nor needed any one's
" Advice." 'T was Adelaide's remaining staunch,
Prevented his destruction root and branch
Forthwith ; but when she died, doom fell, for gay
He made alliances, gave lands away
To whom it pleased accept them, and withdrew
For ever from the world. Taurello, who
Was summoned to the convent, then refused
A word at the wicket, patience thus abused,
Promptly threw off alike his imbecile
Ally's yoke, and his own frank, foolish smile.
Soon a few movements of the happier sort
Changed matters, put himself in men's report
As heretofore ; he had to fight, beside,
And that became him ever. So, in pride
And flushing of this kind of second youth,
He dealt a good-will blow. Este in truth
Lay prone—and men remembered, somewhat late,
A laughing old outrageous stifled hate
He bore to Este—how it would outbreak
At times spite of disguise, like an earthquake
In sunny weather—as that noted day
When with his hundred friends he tried to slay
Azzo before the Kaiser's face : and how,
On Azzo's calm refusal to allow
A liegeman's challenge, straight he too was calmed :
As if his hate could bear to lie embalmed,

Bricked up, the moody Pharaoh, and survive
All intermediate crumblings, and arrive
At earth's catastrophe—'t was Este's crash
Not Azzo's he demanded, so, no rash
Procedure! Este's true antagonist
Rose out of Ecelin: all voices whist,
All eyes were sharpened, wits predicted. He
'T was, leaned in the embrasure absently,
Amused with his own efforts, now, to trace
With his steel-sheathed forefinger Friedrich's face
I' the dust: but as the trees waved sere, his smile
Deepened, and words expressed its thought erewhile.
"Ay, fairly housed at last, my old compeer?
"That we should stick together, all the year
"I kept Vicenza!—How old Boniface,
"Old Azzo caught us in its market-place,
"He by that pillar, I at this,—caught each
"In mid swing, more than fury of his speech,
"Egging the rabble on to disavow
"Allegiance to their Marquis—Bacchus, how
"They boasted! Ecelin must turn their drudge,
"Nor, if released, will Salinguerra grudge
"Paying arrears of tribute due long since—
"Bacchus! My man could promise then, nor wince,
"The bones-and-muscles! Sound of wind and limb,
"Spoke he the set excuse I framed for him:
"And now he sits me, slavering and mute,
"Intent on chafing each starved purple foot
"Benumbed past aching with the altar slab—

" Will no vein throb there when some monk shall blab
" Spitefully to the circle of bald scalps,
" ' Friedrich 's affirmed to be our side the Alps '
" —Eh, brother Lactance, brother Anaclet?
" Sworn to abjure the world, its fume and fret,
" God's own now? Drop the dormitory bar,
" Enfold the scanty grey serge scapular
" Twice o'er the cowl to muffle memories out!
" So! But the midnight whisper turns a shout,
" Eyes wink, mouths open, pulses circulate
" In the stone walls: the past, the world you hate
" Is with you, ambush, open field—or see
" The surging flame—we fire Vicenza—glee!
" Follow, let Pilio and Bernardo chafe!
" Bring up the Mantuans—through San Biagio—safe!
" Ah, the mad people waken? Ah, they writhe
" And reach us? If they block the gate? No tithe
" Can pass—keep back, you Bassanese! The edge,
" Use the edge—shear, thrust, hew, melt down the wedge,
" Let out the black of those black upturned eyes!
" Hell—are they sprinkling fire too? The blood fries
" And hisses on your brass gloves as they tear
" Those upturned faces choking with despair.
" Brave! Slidder through the reeking gate! 'How now?
" 'You six had charge of her?' And then the vow
" Comes, and the foam spirts, hair 's plucked, till one shriek
" (I hear it) and you fling—you cannot speak—
" Your gold-flowered basnet to a man who haled

"The Adelaide he dared scarce view unveiled
"This morn, naked across the fire: how crown
"The archer that exhausted lays you down
"Your infant, smiling at the flame, and dies?
"While one, while mine . . .

"Bacchus! I think there lies
"More than one corpse there" (and he paced the room)
"—Another cinder somewhere: 't was my doom
"Beside, my doom! If Adelaide is dead,
"I live the same, this Azzo lives instead
"Of that to me, and we pull, any how,
"Este into a heap: the matter 's now
"At the true juncture slipping us so oft.
"Ay, Heinrich died and Otho, please you, doffed
"His crown at such a juncture! Still, if hold
"Our Friedrich's purpose, if this chain enfold
"The neck of . . . who but this same Ecelin
"That must recoil when the best days begin!
"Recoil? that 's nought; if the recoiler leaves
"His name for me to fight with, no one grieves:
"But he must interfere, forsooth, unlock
"His cloister to become my stumbling-block
"Just as of old! Ay, ay, there 't is again—
"The land's inevitable Head—explain
"The reverences that subject us! Count
"These Ecelins now! Not to say as fount,
"Originating power of thought,—from twelve
"That drop i' the trenches they joined hands to delve,
"Six shall surpass him, but . . . why, men must twine

"Somehow with something! Ecelin 's a fine
"Clear name! 'Twere simpler, doubtless, twine with me
"At once: our cloistered friend's capacity
"Was of a sort! I had to share myself
"In fifty portions, like an o'ertasked elf
"That 's forced illume in fifty points the vast
"Rare vapour he 's environed by. At last
"My strengths, though sorely frittered, e'en converge
"And crown . . . no, Bacchus, they have yet to urge
"The man be crowned!
"That aloe, an he durst,
"Would climb! Just such a bloated sprawler first
"I noted in Messina's castle-court
"The day I came, when Heinrich asked in sport
"If I would pledge my faith to win him back
"His right in Lombardy: 'for, once bid pack
"'Marauders,' he continued, 'in my stead
"'You rule, Taurello!' and upon this head
"Laid the silk glove of Constance—I see her
"Too, mantled head to foot in miniver,
"Retrude following!
"I am absolved
"From further toil: the empery devolved
"On me, 't was Tito's word: I have to lay
"For once my plan, pursue my plan my way,
"Prompt nobody, and render an account
"Taurello to Taurello! Nay, I mount
"To Friedrich: he conceives the post I kept,
"—Who did true service, able or inept,

" Who 's worthy guerdon, Ecelin or I.
" Me guerdoned, counsel follows: would he vie
" With the Pope really? Azzo, Boniface
" Compose a right-arm Hohenstauffen's race
" Must break ere govern Lombardy. I point
" How easy 't were to twist, once out of joint,
" The socket from the bone:—my Azzo's stare
" Meanwhile! for I, this idle strap to wear,
" Shall—fret myself abundantly, what end
" To serve? There 's left me twenty years to spend
" —How better than my old way? Had I one
" Who laboured overthrow my work—a son
" Hatching with Azzo superb treachery,
" To root my pines up and then poison me,
" Suppose—'t were worth while frustrate that! Beside,
" Another life 's ordained me: the world's tide
" Rolls, and what hope of parting from the press
" Of waves, a single wave through weariness
" Gently lifted aside, laid upon shore?
" My life must be lived out in foam and roar,
" No question. Fifty years the province held
" Taurello; troubles raised, and troubles quelled,
" He in the midst—who leaves this quaint stone place,
" These trees a year or two, then not a trace
" Of him! How obtain hold, fetter men's tongues
" Like this poor minstrel with the foolish songs—
" To which, despite our bustle, he is linked?
" —Flowers one may teaze, that never grow extinct.
" Ay, that patch, surely, green as ever, where

"I set Her Moorish lentisk, by the stair,
"To overawe the aloes; and we trod
"Those flowers, how call you such?—into the sod;
"A stately foreigner—a world of pain
"To make it thrive, arrest rough winds—all vain!
"It would decline; these would not be destroyed:
"And now, where is it? where can you avoid
"The flowers? I frighten children twenty years
"Longer!—which way, too, Ecelin appears
"To thwart me, for his son's besotted youth
"Gives promise of the proper tiger-tooth:
"They feel it at Vicenza! Fate, fate, fate,
"My fine Taurello! Go you, promulgate
"Friedrich's decree, and here 's shall aggrandise
"Young Ecelin—your Prefect's badge! a prize
"Too precious, certainly.
"How now? Compete
"With my old comrade? shuffle from their seat
"His children? Paltry dealing! Do n't I know
"Ecelin? now, I think, and years ago!
"What 's changed—the weakness? did not I compound
"For that, and undertake to keep him sound
"Despite it? Here 's Taurello hankering
"After a boy's preferment—this plaything
"To carry, Bacchus!" And he laughed.

Remark

Why schemes, wherein cold-blooded men embark,
Prosper, when your enthusiastic sort
Fail: while these last are ever stopping short—

(So much they should—so little they can do!)
The careless tribe see nothing to pursue
If they desist; meantime their scheme succeeds.
Thoughts were caprices in the course of deeds
Methodic with Taurello; so, he turned,
Enough amused by fancies fairly earned
Of Este's horror-struck submitted neck,
And Richard, the cowed braggart, at his beck,—
To his own petty but immediate doubt
If he could pacify the League without
Conceding Richard; just to this was brought
That interval of vain discursive thought!
As, shall I say, some Ethiop, past pursuit
Of all enslavers, dips a shackled foot
Burnt to the blood, into the drowsy black
Enormous watercourse which guides him back
To his own tribe again, where he is king;
And laughs because he guesses, numbering
The yellower poison-wattles on the pouch
Of the first lizard wrested from its couch
Under the slime (whose skin, the while, he strips
To cure his nostril with, and festered lips,
And eyeballs bloodshot through the desert blast)
That he has reached its boundary, at last
May breathe;—thinks o'er enchantments of the South
Sovereign to plague his enemies, their mouth,
Eyes, nails and hair; but, these enchantments tried
In fancy, puts them soberly aside
For truth, projects a cool return with friends,

The likelihood of winning mere amends
Ere long; thinks that, takes comfort silently,
Then, from the river's brink, his wrongs and he,
Hugging revenge close to their hearts, are soon
Off-striding for the Mountains of the Moon.
Midnight: the watcher nodded on his spear,
Since clouds dispersing left a passage clear,
For any meagre and discoloured moon
To venture forth; and such was peering soon
Above the harassed city—her close lanes
Closer, not half so tapering her fanes,
As though she shrunk into herself to keep
What little life was saved, more safely. Heap
By heap the watch-fires mouldered, and beside
The blackest spoke Sordello and replied
Palma with none to listen. "'T is your Cause:
" What makes a Ghibellin? There should be laws—
" (Remember how my youth escaped! I trust
" To you for manhood, Palma; tell me just
" As any child)—there must be laws at work
" Explaining this. Assure me, good may lurk
" Under the bad,—my multitude has part
" In your designs, their welfare is at heart
" With Salinguerra, to their interest
" Refer the deeds he dwelt on,—so divest
" Our conference of much that scared me. Why
" Affect that heartless tone to Tito? I
" Esteemed myself, yes, in my inmost mind
" This morn, a recreant to my race—mankind

" O'erlooked till now: why boast my spirit's force,
" —Such force denied its object? why divorce
" These, then admire my spirit's flight the same
" As though it bore up, helped some half-orbed flame
" Else quenched in the dead void, to living space?
" That orb cast off to chaos and disgrace,
" Why vaunt so much my unincumbered dance,
" Making a feat's facilities enhance
" Its marvel? But I front Taurello, one
" Of happier fate, and all I should have done,
" He does; the people's good being paramount
" With him, their progress may perhaps account
" For his abiding still: whereas you heard
" The talk with Tito—the excuse preferred
" For burning those five hostages,—and broached
" By way of blind, as you and I approached,
" I do believe."

She spoke: then he, " My thought
" Plainlier expressed! All to your profit—nought
" Meantime of these, of conquests to achieve
" For them, of wretchedness he might relieve
" While profiting your party. Azzo, too,
" Supports a cause: what cause? Do Guelfs pursue
" Their ends by means like yours, or better?"

When
The Guelfs were proved alike, men weighed with men,
And deed with deed, blaze, blood, with blood and blaze,
Morn broke: " Once more, Sordello, meet its gaze
" Proudly—the people's charge against thee fails

" In every point, while either party quails !
" These are the busy ones : be silent thou !
" Two parties take the world up, and allow
" No third, yet have one principle, subsist
" By the same injustice ; whoso shall enlist
" With either, ranks with man's inveterate foes.
" So there is one less quarrel to compose :
" The Guelf, the Ghibellin may be to curse—
" I have done nothing, but both sides do worse
" Than nothing, Nay, to me, forgotten, reft
" Of insight, lapped by trees and flowers, was left
" The notion of a service—ha ? What lured
" Me here, what mighty aim was I assured
" Must move Taurello ? What if there remained
" A cause, intact, distinct from these, ordained
" For me, its true discoverer ?"
Some one pressed
Before them here, a watcher, to suggest
The subject for a ballad : " They must know
" The tale of the dead worthy, long ago
" Consul of Rome—that 's long ago for us,
" Minstrels and bowmen, idly squabbling thus
" In the world's corner—but too late, no doubt,
" For the brave time he sought to bring about.
" —Not know Crescentius Nomentanus ?" Then
He cast about for terms to tell him, when
Sordello disavowed it, how they used
Whenever their Superior introduced
A novice to the Brotherhood—(" for I

"Was just a brown-sleeve brother, merrily
"Appointed too," quoth he, "till Innocent
"Bade me relinquish, to my small content,
"My wife or my brown sleeves")—some brother spoke
Ere nocturns of Crescentius, to revoke
The edict issued, after his demise,
Which blotted fame alike and effigies,
All out except a floating power, a name
Including, tending to produce the same
Great act. Rome, dead, forgotten, lived at least
Within that brain, though to a vulgar priest
And a vile stranger,—two not worth a slave
Of Rome's, Pope John, King Otho,—fortune gave
The rule there: so, Crescentius, haply dressed
In white, called Roman Consul for a jest,
Taking the people at their word, forth stepped
As upon Brutus' heel, nor ever kept
Rome waiting,—stood erect, and from his brain
Gave Rome out on its ancient place again,
Ay, bade proceed with Brutus' Rome, Kings styled
Themselves mere citizens of, and, beguiled
Into great thoughts thereby, would choose the gem
Out of a lapfull, spoil their diadem
—The Senate's cypher was so hard to scratch!
He flashes like a phanal, all men catch
The flame, Rome 's just accomplished! when returned
Otho, with John, the Consul's step had spurned,
And Hugo Lord of Este, to redress
The wrongs of each. Crescentius in the stress

Of adverse fortune bent. "They crucified
"Their Consul in the Forum; and abide
"E'er since such slaves at Rome, that I—(for I
"Was once a brown-sleeve brother, merrily
"Appointed)—I had option to keep wife
"Or keep brown sleeves, and managed in the strife
"Lose both. A song of Rome!"

And Rome, indeed,
Robed at Goito in fantastic weed,
The Mother-City of his Mantuan days,
Looked an established point of light whence rays
Traversed the world; for, all the clustered homes
Beside of men, seemed bent on being Romes
In their degree; the question was, how each
Should most resemble Rome, clean out of reach.
Nor, of the great Two, either principle,
Struggled to change—but to possess—Rome, still,
Guelf Rome or Ghibellin Rome.

Let Rome advance!

Rome, as she struck Sordello's ignorance—
How could he doubt one moment? Rome 's the Cause!
Rome of the Pandects, all the world's new laws—
Of the Capitol, of Castle Angelo;
New structures, that inordinately glow,
Subdued, brought back to harmony, made ripe
By many a relic of the archetype
Extant for wonder; every upstart church
That hoped to leave old temples in the lurch,
Corrected by the Theatre forlorn

That,—as a mundane shell, its world late born,—
Lay and o'ershadowed it. These hints combined,
Rome typifies the scheme to put mankind
Once more in full possession of their rights.
"Let us have Rome again! On me it lights
"To build up Rome—on me, the first and last:
"For such a future was endured the past!"
And thus, in the grey twilight, forth he sprung
To give his thought consistency among
The very People—let their facts avail
Finish the dream grown from the archer's tale.

6.1.20

BOOK THE FIFTH.

MANKIND TRIUMPH OF A SUDDEN?

Is it the same Sordello in the dusk
As at the dawn?—merely a perished husk
Now, that arose a power fit to build
Up Rome again? The proud conception chilled
So soon? Ay, watch that latest dream of thine
—A Rome indebted to no Palatine—
Drop arch by arch, Sordello! Art, possessed
Of thy wish now, rewarded for thy quest
To-day among Ferrara's squalid sons?
Are this and this and this the shining ones
Meet for the Shining City? Sooth to say,
Your favoured tenantry pursue their way
After a fashion! This companion slips
On the smooth causey, t' other blinkard trips
At his mooned sandal. "Leave to lead the brawls
"Here i' the atria?" No, friend! He that sprawls
On aught but a stibadium . . what his dues
Who puts the lustral vase to such an use?
Oh, huddle up the day's disasters! March,
Ye runagates, and drop thou, arch by arch,
Rome!

Yet before they quite disband—a whim—
Study mere shelter, now, for him, and him,

Nay, even the worst,—just house them! Any cave
Suffices: throw out earth! A loophole? Brave!
They ask to feel the sun shine, see the grass
Grow, hear the larks sing? Dead art thou, alas,
And I am dead! But here's our son excels
At hurdle-weaving any Scythian, fells
Oak and devises rafters, dreams and shapes
His dream into a door-post, just escapes
The mystery of hinges. Lie we both
Perdue another age. The goodly growth
Of brick and stone! Our building-pelt was rough,
But that descendant's garb suits well enough
A portico-contriver. Speed the years—
What's time to us? At last, a city rears
Itself! nay, enter—what's the grave to us?
Lo, our forlorn acquaintance carry thus
The head! Successively sewer, forum, cirque—
Last age, an aqueduct was counted work,
But now they tire the artificer upon
Blank alabaster, black obsidion,
—Careful, Jove's face be duly fulgurant,
And mother Venus' kiss-creased nipples pant
Back into pristine pulpiness, ere fixed
Above the baths. What difference betwixt
This Rome and ours—resemblance what, between
That scurvy dumb-show and this pageant sheen—
These Romans and our rabble? Use thy wit!
The work marched: step by step,—a workman fit
Took each, nor too fit,—to one task, one time,—

No leaping o'er the petty to the prime,
When just the substituting osier lithe
For brittle bulrush, sound wood for soft withe,
To further loam-and-roughcast-work a stage,—
Exacts an architect, exacts an age:
No tables of the Mauritanian tree
For men whose maple-log 's their luxury!
That way was Rome built. "Better" (say you) "merge
" At once all workmen in the demiurge,
" All epochs in a lifetime, every task
" In one!" So should the sudden city bask
I' the day—while those we 'd feast there, want the knack
Of keeping fresh-chalked gowns from speck and brack,
Distinguish not rare peacock from vile swan,
Nor Mareotic juice from Cœcuban.
" Enough of Rome! 'T was happy to conceive
" Rome on a sudden, nor shall fate bereave
" Me of that credit: for the rest, her spite
" Is an old story—serves my folly right
" By adding yet another to the dull
" List of abortions—things proved beautiful
" Could they be done, Sordello cannot do."
He sat upon the terrace, plucked and threw
The powdery aloe-cusps away, saw shift
Rome's walls, and drop arch after arch, and drift
Mist-like afar those pillars of all stripe,
Mounds of all majesty. " Thou archetype,
" Last of my dreams and loveliest, depart!"
And then a low voice wound into his heart:

"Sordello!" (low as some old Pythoness
Conceding to a Lydian King's distress
The cause of his long error—one mistake
Of her past oracle) "Sordello, wake!
" God has conceded two sights to a man—
" One, of men's whole work, time's completed plan,
" The other, of the minute's work, man's first
" Step to the plan's completeness: what 's dispersed
" Save hope of that supreme step which, descried
" Earliest, was meant still to remain untried
" Only to give you heart to take your own
" Step, and there stay—leaving the rest alone?
" Where is the vanity? Why count as one
" The first step, with the last step? What is gone
" Except Rome's aëry magnificence,
" That last step you 'd take first?—an evidence
" You were God: be man now! Let those glances fall!
" The basis, the beginning step of all,
" Which proves you just a man—is that gone too?
" Pity to disconcert one versed as you
" In fate's ill-nature! but its full extent
" Eludes Sordello, even: the veil rent,
" Read the black writing—that collective man
" Outstrips the individual! Who began
" The acknowledged greatnesses? Ay, your own art
" Shall serve us: put the poet's mimes apart—
" Close with the poet's self, and lo, a dim
" Yet too plain form divides itself from him!
" Alcamo's song enmeshes the lulled Isle,

" Woven into the echoes left erewhile
" By Nina, one soft web of song : no more
" Turning his name, then, flower-like o'er and o'er !
" An elder poet in the younger's place ;
" Nina's the strength, but Alcamo's the grace :
" Each neutralizes each then ! Search your fill ;
" You get no whole and perfect Poet—still
" New Ninas, Alcamos, till time's mid-night
" Shrouds all—or better say, the shutting light
" Of a forgotten yesterday. Dissect
" Every ideal workman—(to reject
" In favour of your fearful ignorance
" The thousand phantasms eager to advance,
" And point you but to those within your reach)—
" Were you the first who brought—(in modern speech)
" The Multitude to be materialized ?
" That loose eternal unrest—who devised
" An apparition i' the midst ? The rout
" Was checked, a breathless ring was formed about
" That sudden flower : get round at any risk
" The gold-rough pointel, silver-blazing disk
" O' the lily ! Swords across it ! Reign thy reign
" And serve thy frolic service, Charlemagne !
" —The very child of over-joyousness,
" Unfeeling thence, strong therefore : Strength by stress
" Of Strength comes of that forehead confident,
" Those widened eyes expecting heart's content,
" A calm as out of just-quelled noise ; nor swerves
" For doubt, the ample cheek in gracious curves

" Abutting on the upthrust nether lip:
" He wills, how should he doubt then? Ages slip:
" Was it Sordello pried into the work
" So far accomplished, and discovered lurk
" A company amid the other clans,
" Only distinct in priests for castellans
" And popes for suzerains (their rule confessed
" Its rule, their interest its interest,
" Living for sake of living—there an end,—
" Wrapt in itself, no energy to spend
" In making adversaries or allies),—
" Dived you into its capabilities
" And dared create, out of that sect, a soul
" Should turn a multitude, already whole,
" Into its body? Speak plainer! Is 't so sure
" God's church lives by a King's investiture?
" Look to last step! A staggering—a shock—
" What 's mere sand is demolished, while the rock
" Endures: a column of black fiery dust
" Blots heaven—that help was prematurely thrust
" Aside, perchance!—but the air clears, nought 's erased
" Of the true outline! Thus much being firm based,
" The other was a scaffold. See him stand
" Buttressed upon his mattock, Hildebrand
" Of the huge brain-mask welded ply o'er ply
" As in a forge; it buries either eye
" White and extinct, that stupid brow; teeth clenched,
" The neck tight-corded, too, the chin deep-trenched,
" As if a cloud enveloped him while fought

" Under its shade, grim prizers, thought with thought
" At dead-lock, agonizing he, until
" The victor thought leap radiant up, and Will,
" The slave with folded arms and drooping lids
" They fought for, lean forth flame-like as it bids.
" Call him no flower—a mandrake of the earth,
" Thwarted and dwarfed and blasted in its birth,
" Rather,—a fruit of suffering's excess,
" Thence feeling, therefore stronger: still by stress
" Of Strength, work Knowledge! Full three hundred years
" Have men to wear away in smiles and tears
" Between the two that nearly seemed to touch,
" Observe you! quit one workman and you clutch
" Another, letting both their trains go by—
" The actors-out of either's policy,
" Heinrich, on this hand, Otho, Barbaross,
" Carry the three Imperial crowns across,
" Aix' Iron, Milan's Silver, and Rome's Gold—
" While Alexander, Innocent uphold
" On that, each Papal key—but, link on link,
" Why is it neither chain betrays a chink?
" How coalesce the small and great? Alack,
" For one thrust forward, fifty such fall back!
" Do the popes coupled there help Gregory
" Alone? Hark—from the hermit Peter's cry
" At Claremont, down to the first serf that says
" Friedrich 's no liege of his while he delays
" Getting the Pope's curse off him! The Crusade—

"Or trick of breeding Strength by other aid
"Than Strength, is safe. Hark—from the wild harangue
"Of Vimmercato, to the carroch's clang
"Yonder! The League—or trick of turning Strength
"Against Pernicious Strength, is safe at length.
"Yet hark—from Mantuan Albert making cease
"The fierce ones, to St Francis preaching peace
"Yonder! God's Truce—or trick to supersede
"The very Use of Strength, is safe. Indeed
"We trench upon the future. Who is found
"To take next step, next age—trail o'er the ground—
"Shall I say, gourd-like?—not the flower's display
"Nor the root's prowess, but the plenteous way
"O' the plant—produced by joy and sorrow, whence
"Unfeeling and yet feeling, strongest thence?
"Knowledge by stress of merely Knowledge? No—
"E'en were Sordello ready to forego
"His life for this, 't were overleaping work
"Some one has first to do, howe'er it irk,
"Nor stay a foot's breadth from the beaten road.
"Who means to help must still support the load
"Hildebrand lifted—'why hast Thou,' he groaned,
"'Imposed on me a burthen, Paul had moaned,
"'And Moses dropped beneath?' Much done—and yet
"Doubtless that grandest task God ever set
"On man, left much to do: at his arm's wrench,
"Charlemagne's scaffold fell; but pillars blench
"Merely, start back again—perchance have been
"Taken for buttresses: crash every screen,

"Hammer the tenons better, and engage
"A gang about your work, for the next age
"Or two, of Knowledge, part by Strength and part
"By Knowledge! Then, indeed, perchance may start
"Sordello on his race—would time divulge
"Such secrets! If one step's awry, one bulge
"Calls for correction by a step we thought
"Got over long since, why, till that is wrought,
"No progress! And the scaffold in its turn
"Becomes, its service o'er, a thing to spurn.
"Meanwhile, if your half-dozen years of life
"In store, dispose you to forego the strife,
"Who takes exception? Only bear in mind,
"Ferrara's reached, Goito's left behind:
"As you then were, as half yourself, desist!
"—The warrior-part of you may, an it list,
"Finding real faulchions difficult to poise,
"Fling them afar and taste the cream of joys
"By wielding such in fancy,—what is bard
"Of you may spurn the vehicle that marred
"Elys so much, and in free fancy glut
"His sense, yet write no verses—you have but
"To please yourself ~~for law,~~ and once could please
"What once appeared yourself, by dreaming these
"Rather than doing these, in days gone by.
"But all is changed the moment you descry
"Mankind as half yourself,—then, fancy's trade
"Ends once and always: how may half evade
"The other half? men are found half of you.

"Out of a thousand helps, just one or two
"Can be accomplished presently: but flinch
"From these (as from the faulchion, raised an inch,
"Elys, described a couplet) and make proof
"Of fancy,—then, while one half lölls aloof
"I' the vines, completing Rome to the tip-top—
"See if, for that, your other half will stop
"A tear, begin a smile! The rabble's woes,
"Ludicrous in their patience as they chose
"To sit about their town and quietly
"Be slaughtered,—the poor reckless soldiery,
"With their ignoble rhymes on Richard, how
"'Pölt-foot,' sang they, 'was in a pitfall now,'
"Cheering each other from the engine-mounts,—
"That crippled sprawling idiot who recounts
"How, lopped of limbs, he lay, stupid as stone,
"Till the pains crept from out him one by one,
"And wriggles round the archers on his head
"To earn a morsel of their chestnut bread,—
"And Cino, always in the self-same place
"Weeping; beside that other wretch's case,
"Eyepits to ear, one gangrene since he plied
"The engine in his coat of raw sheep's hide
"A double watch in the noon sun; and see
"Lucchino, beauty, with the favours free,
"Trim hacqueton, spruce beard and scented hair,
"Campaigning it for the first time—cut there
"In two already, boy enough to crawl
"For latter orpine round the southern wall,

"Tomà, where Richard's kept, because that whore
" Marfisa, the fool never saw before,
" Sickened for flowers this wearisomest siege :
" And Tiso's wife—men liked their pretty liege,
" Cared for her least of whims once,—Berta, wed
" A twelvemonth gone, and, now poor Tiso 's dead,
" Delivering herself of his first child
" On that chance heap of wet filth, reconciled
" To fifty gazers !"—(Here a wind below
Made moody music augural of woe
From the pine barrier)—" What if, now the scene
" Draws to a close, yourself have really been
" —You, plucking purples in Goito's moss
" Like edges of a trabea (not to cross
" Your consul-humour) or dry aloe-shafts
" For fasces, at Ferrara—he, fate wafts,
" This very age, her whole inheritance
" Of opportunities ? Yet you advance
" Upon the last ! Since talking is your trade,
" There's Salinguerra left you to persuade :
" Fail ! then "—
" No—no—which latest chance secure ! "
Leaped up and cried Sordello : " this made sure,
" The past were yet redeemable ; its work
" Was—help the Guelfs, whom I, howe'er it irk,
" Thus help ! " He shook the foolish aloe-haulm
Out of his doublet, paused, proceeded calm
To the appointed presence. The large head
Turned on its socket ; " And your spokesman," said

The large voice, "is Elcorte's happy sprout?
"Few such"—(so finishing a speech no doubt
Addressed to Palma, silent at his side)
"—My sober councils have diversified.
"Elcorte's son! good: forward as you may,
"Our lady's minstrel with so much to say!"
The hesitating sunset floated back,
Rosily traversed in the wonted track
The chamber, from the lattice o'er the girth
Of pines, to the huge eagle blacked in earth
Opposite,—outlined sudden, spur to crest,
That solid Salinguerra, and caressed
Palma's contour; 't was day looped back night's pall;
Sordello had a chance left spite of all.

And much he made of the convincing speech
Meant to compensate for the past and reach
Through his youth's daybreak of unprofit, quite
To his noon's labour, so proceed till night
Leisurely! The great argument to bind
Taurello with the Guelf Cause, body and mind,
—Came the consummate rhetoric to that?
Yet most Sordello's argument dropped flat
Through his accustomed fault of breaking yoke,
Disjoining him who felt from him who spoke.
Was 't not a touching incident—so prompt
A rendering the world its just accompt,
Once proved its debtor? Who 'd suppose, before
This proof, that he, Goito's god of yore,
At duty's instance could demean himself

So memorably, dwindle to a Guelf?
Be sure, in such delicious flattery steeped,
His inmost self at the out-portion peeped,
Thus occupied; then stole a glance at those
Appealed to, curious if her colour rose
Or his lip moved, while he discreetly urged
The need of Lombardy becoming purged
At soonest of her barons; the poor part
Abandoned thus, missing the blood at heart
And spirit in brain, unseasonably off
Elsewhere! But, though his speech was worthy scoff,
Good-humoured Salinguerra, famed for tact
And tongue, who, careless of his phrase, ne'er lacked
The right phrase, and harangued Honorius dumb
At his accession,—looked as all fell plumb
To purpose and himself found interest
In every point his new instructor pressed
—Left playing with the rescript's white wax seal
To scrutinize Sordello head and heel.
He means to yield assent sure? No, alas!
All he replied was, "What, it comes to pass
"That poesy, sooner than politics,
"Makes fade young hair?" To think such speech could fix
Taurello!

Then a flash of bitter truth:
So fantasies could break and fritter youth
That he had long ago lost earnestness,
Lost will to work, lost power to even express

The need of working! Earth was turned a grave:
No more occasions now, though he should crave
Just one, in right of superhuman toil,
To do what was undone, repair such spoil,
Alter the past—nothing would give the chance!
Not that he was to die; he saw askance
Protract the ignominious years beyond
To dream in—time to hope and time despond,
Remember and forget, be sad, rejoice
As saved a trouble; he might, at his choice,
One way or other, idle life out, drop
No few smooth verses by the way—for prop,
A thyrsus, these sad people, all the same,
Should pick up, and set store by,—far from blame,
Plant o'er his hearse, convinced his better part
Survived him. "Rather tear men out the heart
"Of the truth!"—Sordello muttered, and renewed
His propositions for the Multitude.

But Salinguerra, who at this attack
Had thrown great breast and ruffling corslet back
To hear the better, smilingly resumed
His task; beneath, the carroch's warning boomed;
He must decide with Tito; courteously
He turned then, even seeming to agree
With his admonisher—"Assist the Pope,
"Extend Guelf domination, fill the scope
"Of the Church, thus based on All, by All, for All—
"Change Secular to Evangelical"—
Echoing his very sentence: all seemed lost,

When suddenly he looked up, laughingly almost,
To Palma: "This opinion of your friend's—
" For instance, would it answer Palma's ends?
" Best, were it not, turn Guelf, submit our Strength"—
(Here he drew out his baldric to its length)
—" To the Pope's Knowledge—let our captive slip,
" Wide to the walls throw ope our gates, equip
" Azzo with . . . what I hold here? Who 'll subscribe
" To a trite censure of the minstrel tribe
" Henceforward? or pronounce, as Heinrich used,
" 'Spear-heads for battle, burr-heads for the joust!'
" —When Constance, for his couplets, would promote
" Alcamo, from a parti-coloured coat,
" To holding her lord's stirrup in the wars.
" Not that I see where couplet-making jars
" With common sense: at Mantua I had borne
" This chanted, better than their most forlorn
" Of bull-baits,—that 's indisputable!"

Brave!

Whom vanity nigh slew, contempt shall save!
All 's at an end: a Troubadour suppose
Mankind will class him with their friends or foes?
A puny uncouth ailing vassal think
The world and him bound in some special link?
Abrupt the visionary tether burst.
What were rewarded here, or what amerced
If a poor drudge, solicitous to dream
Deservingly, got tangled by his theme
So far as to conceit the knack or gift

Or whatsoe'er it be, of verse, might lift
The globe, a lever like the hand and head
Of—"Men of Action," as the Jongleurs said,
—"The Great Men," in the people's dialect?
And not a moment did this scorn affect
Sordello: scorn the poet? They, for once,
Asking "what was," obtained a full response.
Bid Naddo think at Mantua, he had but
To look into his promptuary, put
Finger on a set thought in a set speech:
But was Sordello fitted thus for each
Conjecture? Nowise; since within his soul,
Perception brooded unexpressed and whole.
A healthy spirit like a healthy frame
Craves aliment in plenty—all the same,
Changes, assimilates its aliment.
Perceived Sordello, on a truth intent?
Next day no formularies more you saw
Than figs or olives in a sated maw.
'T is Knowledge, whither such perceptions tend;
They lose themselves in that, means to an end,
The many old producing some one new,
A last unlike the first. If lies are true,
The Caliph's wheel-work man of brass receives
A meal, munched millet grains and lettuce leaves
Together in his stomach rattle loose;
You find them perfect next day to produce:
But ne'er expect the man, on strength of that,
Can roll an iron camel-collar flat

Like Haroun's self! I tell you, what was stored
Bit by bit through Sordello's life, outpoured
That eve, was, for that age, a novel thing:
And round those three the People formed a ring,
Of visionary judges whose award
He recognised in full—faces that barred
Henceforth return to the old careless life,
In whose great presence, therefore, his first strife
For their sake must not be ignobly fought,
All these, for once, approved of him, he thought,
Suspended their own vengeance, chose await
The issue of this strife to reinstate
Them in the right of taking it—in fact
He must be proved king ere they could exact
Vengeance for such king's defalcation. Last,
A reason why the phrases flowed so fast
Was in his quite forgetting for a time
Himself in his amazement that the rhyme
Disguised the royalty so much: he there—
And Salinguerra yet all unaware
Who was the lord, who liegeman!

" Thus I lay
" On thine my spirit and compel obey
" His lord,—my liegeman,—impotent to build
" Another Rome, but hardly so unskilled
" In what such builder should have been, as brook
" One shame beyond the charge that I forsook
" His function! Free me from that shame, I bend
" A brow before, suppose new years to spend,—

" Allow each chance, nor fruitlessly, recur—
" Measure thee with the Minstrel, then, demur
" At any crowd he claims! That I must cede
" Shamed now, my right to my especial meed—
" Confess thee fitter help the world than I
" Ordained its champion from eternity,
" Is much: but to behold thee scorn the post
" I quit in thy behalf—to hear thee boast
" What makes my own despair!" And while he rung
The changes on this theme, the roof up-sprung,
The sad walls of the presence-chamber died
Into the distance, or embowering vied
With far-away Goito's vine-frontier;
And crowds of faces—(only keeping clear
The rose-light in the midst, his vantage-ground
To fight their battle from)—deep clustered round
Sordello, with good wishes no mere breath,
Kind prayers for him no vapour, since, come death,
Come life, he was fresh sinewed every joint,
Each bone new-marrowed as whom gods anoint
Though mortal to their rescue. Now let sprawl
The snaky volumes hither! Is Typhon all
For Hercules to trample—good report
From Salinguerra only to extort?
" So was I" (closed he his inculcating,
A poet must be earth's essential king)
" So was I, royal so, and if I fail,
" 'T is not the royalty, ye witness quail,
" But one deposed who, caring not exert

" Its proper essence, trifled malapert
" With accidents instead—good things assigned
" As heralds of a better thing behind—
" And, worthy through display of these, put forth
" Never the inmost all-surpassing worth
" That constitutes him king precisely since
" As yet no other spirit may evince
" Its like: the power he took most pride to test,
" Whereby all forms of life had been professed
" At pleasure, forms already on the earth,
" Was but a means to power beyond, whose birth
" Should, in its novelty, be kingship's proof.
" Now, whether he came near or kept aloof
" The several forms he longed to imitate,
" Not there the kingship lay, he sees too late.
" Those forms, unalterable first as last,
" Proved him her copier, not the protoplast
" Of nature: what would come of being free,
" By action to exhibit tree for tree,
" Bird, beast, for beast and bird, or prove earth bore
" One veritable man or woman more?
" Means to an end, such proofs are: what the end?
" Let essence, whatsoe'er it be, extend—
" Never contract. Already you include
" The multitude; then let the multitude
" Include yourself; and the result were new:
" Themselves before, the multitude turn you.
" This were to live and move and have, in them,
" Your being, and secure a diadem

" You should transmit (because no cycle yearns
" Beyond itself, but on itself returns)
" When, the full sphere in wane, the world o'erlaid
" Long since with you, shall have in turn obeyed
" Some orb still prouder, some displayer, still
" More potent than the last, of human will,
" And some new king depose the old. Of such
" Am I—whom pride of this elates too much?
" Safe, rather say, 'mid troops of peers again;
" I, with my words, hailed brother of the train
" Deeds once sufficed: for, let the world roll back,
" Who fails, through deeds howe'er diverse, re-track
" My purpose still, my task? A teeming crust—
" Air, flame, earth, wave at conflict! Then, needs must
" Emerge some Calm embodied, these refer
" The brawl to;—yellow-bearded Jupiter?
" No! Saturn; some existence like a pact
" And protest against Chaos, some first fact
" I' the faint of time. My deep of life, I know,
" Is unavailing e'en to poorly show" . . .
(For here the Chief immeasurably yawned)
. . . " Deeds in their due gradation till Song dawned—
" The fullest effluence of the finest mind,—
" All in degree, no way diverse in kind
" From minds about it, minds which, more or less
" Lofty or low, move seeking to impress
" Themselves on somewhat; but one mind has climbed
" Step after step, by just ascent sublimed.
" Thought is the soul of act, and, stage by stage,

"Soul is from body still to disengage
"As tending to a freedom which rejects
"Such help and incorporeally affects
"The world, producing deeds but not by deeds,
"Swaying, in others, frames itself exceeds,
"Assigning them the simpler tasks it used
"To patiently perform till Song produced
"Acts, by thoughts only, for the mind: divest
"Mind of e'en Thought, and, lo, God's unexpressed
"Will draws above us! All then is to win
"Save that. How much for me, then? where begin
"My work? About me, faces! and they flock,
"The earnest faces. What shall I unlock
"By song? behold me prompt, whate'er it be,
"To minister: how much can mortals see
"Of Life? No more than so? I take the task
"And marshal you Life's elemental masque,
"Show Men, on evil or on good lay stress,
"This light, this shade make prominent, suppress
"All ordinary hues that softening blend
"Such natures with the level. Apprehend
"Which sinner is, which saint, if I allot
"Hell, Purgatory, Heaven, a blaze or blot,
"To those you doubt concerning! I enwomb
"Some wretched Friedrich with his red-hot tomb;
"Some dubious spirit, Lombard Agilulph
"With the black chastening river I engulph!
"Some unapproached Matilda I enshrine
"With languors of the planet of decline—

" These, fail to recognise, to arbitrate
" Between henceforth, to rightly estimate
" Thus marshalled in the masque ! Myself, the while,
" As one of you, am witness, shrink or smile
" At my own showing ! Next age—what 's to do ?
" The men and women stationed hitherto
" Will I unstation, good and bad, conduct
" Each nature to its farthest, or obstruct
" At soonest, in the world : light, thwarted, breaks
" A limpid purity to rainbow flakes,
" Or shadow, massed, freezes to gloom : behold
" How such, with fit assistance to unfold,
" Or obstacles to crush them, disengage
" Their forms, love, hate, hope, fear, peace make, war
" wage,
" In presence of you all ! Myself, implied
" Superior now, as, by the platform's side,
" I bade them do and suffer,—would last content
" The world . . . no—that 's too far ! I circumvent
" A few, my masque contented, and to these
" Offer unveil the last of mysteries—
" Man's inmost life shall have yet freer play :
" Once more I cast external things away,
" And natures composite, so decompose
" That " . . . Why, he writes *Sordello !*
" How I rose,
" And how have you advanced ! since evermore
" Yourselves effect what I was fain before
" Effect, what I supplied, yourselves suggest,

" What I leave bare, yourselves can now invest.
" How we attain to talk as brothers talk,
" In half-words, call things by half-names, no balk
" From discontinuing old aids. To-day
" Takes in account the work of Yesterday:
" Has not the world a Past now, its adept
" Consults ere he dispense with or accept
" New aids? a single touch more may enhance,
" A touch less turn to insignificance
" Those structures' symmetry the past has strewed
" The world with, once so bare. Leave the mere rude
" Explicit details! 't is but brother's speech
" We need, speech where an accent's change gives each
" The other's soul—no speech to understand
" By former audience: need was then to expand,
" Expatiate—hardly were we brothers! true—
" Nor I lament my small remove from you,
" Nor reconstruct what stands already. Ends
" Accomplished turn to means: my art intends
" New structure from the ancient: as they changed
" The spoils of every clime at Venice, ranged
" The horned and snouted Libyan god, upright
" As in his desert, by some simple bright
" Clay cinerary pitcher—Thebes as Rome,
" Athens as Byzant rifled, till their Dome
" From earth's reputed consummations razed
" A seal, the all-transmuting Triad blazed
" Above. Ah, whose that fortune? Ne'ertheless
" E'en he must stoop contented to express

" No tithe of what 's to say—the vehicle
" Never sufficient: but his work is still
" For faces like the faces that select
" The single service I am bound effect,—
" That bid me cast aside such fancies, bow
" Taurello to the Guelf cause, disallow
" The Kaiser's coming—which with heart, soul, strength,
" I labour for, this eve, who feel at length
" My past career's outrageous vanity,
" And would, as its amends, die, even die
" Now I first estimate the boon of life,
" If death might win compliance—sure, this strife
" Is right for once—the People my support."
My poor Sordello! what may we extort
By this, I wonder? Palma's lighted eyes
Turned to Taurello who, long past surprise,
Began, " You love him—what you 'd say at large
" Let me say briefly. First, your father's charge
" To me, his friend, peruse: I guessed indeed
" You were no stranger to the course decreed.
" He bids me leave his children to the saints:
" As for a certain project, he acquaints
" The Pope with that, and offers him the best
" Of your possessions to permit the rest
" Go peaceably—to Ecelin, a stripe
" Of soil the cursed Vicentines will gripe,
" —To Alberic, a patch the Trevisan
" Clutches already; extricate, who can,
" Treville, Villarazzi, Puissolo,

" Cartiglione, Loria !—all go,
" And with them go my hopes. 'T is lost, then !
" Lost
" This eve, our crisis, and some pains it cost
" Procuring ; thirty years—as good I 'd spent
" Like our admonisher ! But each his bent
" Pursues : no question, one might live absurd
" Oneself this while, by deed as he by word,
" Persisting to obtrude an influence where
" 'T is made account of, much as . . . nay, you fare
" With twice the fortune, youngster !—I submit,
" Happy to parallel my waste of wit
" With the renowned Sordello's : you decide
" A course for me. Romano may abide
" Romano,—Bacchus ! After all, what dearth
" Of Ecelins and Alberics on earth ?
" Say there 's a prize in prospect, must disgrace
" Betide competitors, unless they style
" Themselves Romano ? Were it worth my while
" To try my own luck ! But an obscure place
" Suits me—there wants a youth to bustle, stalk
" And attitudinize—some fight, more talk,
" Most flaunting badges—how, I might make clear
" Since Friedrich's very purposes lie here
" —Here, pity they are like to lie ! For me,
" With station fixed unceremoniously
" Long since, small use contesting ; I am but
" The liegeman, you are born the lieges—shut
" That gentle mouth now ! or resume your kin

" In your sweet self; were Palma Ecelin
" For me to work with! Could that neck endure
" This bauble for a cumbrous garniture,
" She should . . . or might one bear it for her? Stay—
" I have not been so flattered many a day
" As by your pale friend—Bacchus! The least help
" Would lick the hind's fawn to a lion's whelp—
" His neck is broad enough—a ready tongue
" Beside—too writhled—but, the main thing, young—
" I could . . . why, look ye!"
And the badge was thrown
Across Sordello's neck: "This badge alone
"Makes you Romano's Head—becomes superb
"On your bare neck, which would, on mine, disturb
"The pauldron," said Taurello. A mad act,
Nor even dreamed about before—in fact,
Not when his sportive arm rose for the nonce—
But he had dallied overmuch, this once,
With power: the thing was done, and he, aware
The thing was done, proceeded to declare—
(So like a nature made to serve, excel
In serving, only feel by service well!)
—That he would make Sordello that and more.
" As good a scheme as any! What 's to pore
" At in my face?" he asked—" ponder instead
" This piece of news; you are Romano 's Head!
" One cannot slacken pace so near the goal,
" Suffer my Azzo to escape heart-whole
" This time! For you there 's Palma to espouse—

"For me, one crowning trouble ere I house
"Like my compeer."
On which ensued a strange
And solemn visitation; there came change
O'er every one of them; each looked on each:
Up in the midst a truth grew, without speech.
And when the giddiness sank and the haze
Subsided, they were sitting, no amaze,
Sordello with the baldric on, his sire
Silent, though his proportions seemed aspire
Momently; and, interpreting the thrill
Night at its ebb, Palma was found there still
Relating somewhat Adelaide confessed
A year ago, while dying on her breast,—
Of a contrivance that Vicenza night,
When Ecelin had birth. "Their convoy's flight,
"Cut off a moment, coiled inside the flame
"That wallowed like a dragon at his game
"The toppling city through—San Biagio rocks!
"And wounded lies in her delicious locks
"Retrude, the frail mother, on her face,
"None of her wasted, just in one embrace
"Covering her child: when, as they lifted her,
"Cleaving the tumult, mighty, mightier
"And mightiest Taurello's cry outbroke,
"Leapt like a tongue of fire that cleaves the smoke,
"Midmost to cheer his Mantuans onward—drown
"His colleague Ecelin's clamour, up and down
"The disarray: failed Adelaide see then

"Who was the natural chief, the man of men?
"Outstripping time, her infant there burst swathe,
"Stood up with eyes haggard beyond the scathe
"From wandering after his heritage
"Lost once and lost for aye—and why that rage,
"That deprecating glance? A new shape leant
"On a familar shape—gloatingly bent
"O'er his discomfiture; 'mid wreaths it wore,
"Still one outflamed the rest—her child's before
"'T was Salinguerra's for his child: scorn, hate,
"Rage startled her from Ecelin—too late!
"Then was the moment!—rival's foot had spurned
"Never that brow to earth! Ere sense returned—
"The act conceived, adventured and complete,
"They bore away to an obscure retreat
"Mother and child—Retrude's self not slain"
(Nor even here Taurello moved) "though pain
"Was fled; and what assured them most 't was fled,
"All pain, was, if they raised the pale hushed head
"'T would turn this way and that, waver awhile,
"And only settle into its old smile—
"(Graceful as the disquieted water-flag
"Steadying itself, remarked they, in the quag
"On either side their path)—when suffered look
"Down on her child. They marched: no sign once shook
"The company's close litter of crossed spears
"Till, as they reached Goito, a few tears
"Slipped in the sunset from her long black lash,

"And she was gone. So far the action rash ;
"No crime. They laid Retrude in the font,
"Taurello's very gift, her child was wont
"To sit beneath—constant as eve he came
"To sit by its attendant girls the same
"As one of them. For Palma, she would blend
"With this magnific spirit to the end,
"That ruled her first ; but scarcely had she dared
"To disobey the Adelaide who scared
"Her into vowing never to disclose
"A secret to her husband, which so froze
"His blood at half-recital, she contrived
"To hide from him Taurello's infant lived,
"Lest, by revealing that, himself should mar
"Romano's fortunes. And, a crime so far,
"Palma received that action : she was told
"Of Salinguerra's nature, of his cold
"Calm acquiescence in his lot ! But free
"To impart the secret to Romano, she
"Engaged to repossess Sordello of
"His heritage, and hers, and that way doff
"The mask, but after years, long years : while now,
"Was not Romano's sign-mark on that brow?"
Across Taurello's heart his arms were locked :
And when he did speak 't was as if he mocked
The minstrel, "who had not to move," he said,
"Nor stir—should fate defraud him of a shred
"Of his son's infancy? much less of his youth!"
(Laughingly all this)—"which to aid, in truth,

" Himself, reserved on purpose, had not grown
" Old, not too old—'t was best they kept alone
" Till now, and never idly met till now ;"
—Then, in the same breath, told Sordello how
All intimations of this eve's event
Were lies, for Friedrich must advance to Trent,
Thence to Verona, then to Rome, there stop,
Tumble the Church down, institute a-top
The Alps a Prefecture of Lombardy :
—" That 's now !—no prophesying what may be
" Anon, with a new monarch of the clime,
" Native of Gesi, passing his youth's prime
" At Naples. Tito bids my choice decide
" On whom . . ."
" Embrace him, madman !" Palma cried,
Who through the laugh saw sweat-drops burst apace,
And his lips blanching : he did not embrace
Sordello, but he laid Sordello's hand
On his own eyes, mouth, forehead.
Understand,
This while Sordello was becoming flushed
Out of his whiteness ; thoughts rushed, fancies rushed ;
He pressed his hand upon his head and signed
Both should forbear him. " Nay, the best 's behind !"
Taurello laughed—not quite with the same laugh :
" The truth is, thus we scatter, ay, like chaff
" These Guelfs, a despicable monk recoils
" From : nor expect a fickle Kaiser spoils
" Our triumph !—Friedrich ? Think you, I intend

"Friedrich shall reap the fruits of blood I spend
"And brain I waste? Think you, the people clap
"Their hands at my out-hewing this wild gap
"For any Friedrich to fill up? 'T is mine—
"That 's yours: I tell you, towards some such design
"Have I worked blindly, yes, and idly, yes,
"And for another, yes—but worked no less
"With instinct at my heart; I else had swerved,
"While now—look round! My cunning has preserved
"Samminiato—that 's a central place
"Secures us Florence, boy,—in Pisa's case,
"By land as she by sea; with Pisa ours,
"And Florence, and Pistoia, one devours
"The land at leisure! Gloriously dispersed—
"Brescia, observe, Milan, Piacenza first
"That flanked us (ah, you know not!) in the March;
"On these we pile, as keystone of our arch,
"Romagna and Bologna, whose first span
"Covered the Trentine and the Valsugan;
"Sofia's Egna by Bolgiano 's sure!" . . .
So he proceeded: half of all this, pure
Delusion, doubtless, nor the rest too true,
But what was undone he felt sure to do,
As ring by ring he wrung off, flung away
The pauldron-rings to give his sword-arm play—
Need of the sword now! That would soon adjust
Aught wrong at present; to the sword intrust
Sordello's whiteness, undersize: 't was plain
He hardly rendered right to his own brain—

Like a brave hound, men educate to pride
Himself on speed or scent nor aught beside,
As though he could not, gift by gift, match men!
Palma had listened patiently: but when
'T was time expostulate, attempt withdraw
Taurello from his child, she, without awe
Took off his iron arms from, one by one,
Sordello's shrinking shoulders, and, that done,
Made him avert his visage and relieve
Sordello (you might see his corslet heave
The while) who, loose, rose—tried to speak, then sank:
They left him in the chamber. All was blank.
    And even reeling down the narrow stair
Taurello kept up, as though unaware
Palma was by to guide him, the old device
—Something of Milan—"how we muster thrice
" The Torriani's strength there; all along
" Our own Visconti cowed them "—thus the song
Continued even while she bade him stoop,
Thrid somehow, by some glimpse of arrow-loop,
The turnings to the gallery below,
Where he stopped short as Palma let him go.
When he had sat in silence long enough
Splintering the stone bench, braving a rebuff
She stopped the truncheon; only to commence
One of Sordello's poems, a pretence
For speaking, some poor rhyme of "Elys' hair
" And head that 's sharp and perfect like a pear,
" So smooth and close are laid the few fine locks

" Stained like pale honey oozed from topmost rocks
" Sun-blanched the livelong summer "—from his worst
Performance, the Goito, as his first :
And that at end, conceiving from the brow
And open mouth no silence would serve now,
Went on to say the whole world loved that man
And, for that matter, thought his face, tho' wan,
Eclipsed the Count's—he sucking in each phrase
As if an angel spoke. The foolish praise
Ended, he drew her on his mailed knees, made
Her face a framework with his hands, a shade,
A crown, an aureole : there must she remain
(Her little mouth compressed with smiling pain
As in his gloves she felt her tresses twitch)
To get the best look at, in fittest niche
Dispose his saint. That done, he kissed her brow,
—" Lauded her father for his treason now,"
He told her, " only, how could one suspect
" The wit in him ?—whose clansman, recollect,
" Was ever Salinguerra—she, the same,
" Romano and his lady—so, might claim
" To know all, as she should "—and thus begun
Schemes with a vengeance, schemes on schemes, " not
one
" Fit to be told that foolish boy," he said,
" But only let Sordello Palma wed,
" —Then ! "

'T was a dim long narrow place at best :
Midway a sole grate showed the fiery West,

As shows its corpse the world's end some split tomb—
A gloom, a rift of fire, another gloom,
Faced Palma—but at length Taurello set
Her free; the grating held one ragged jet
Of fierce gold fire: he lifted her within
The hollow underneath—how else begin
Fate's second marvellous cycle, else renew
The ages than with Palma plain in view?
Then paced the passage, hands clenched, head erect,
Pursuing his discourse; a grand unchecked
Monotony made out from his quick talk
And the recurring noises of his walk;
—Somewhat too much like the o'ercharged assent
Of two resolved friends in one danger blent,
Who hearten each the other against heart;
Boasting there 's nought to care for, when, apart
The boaster, all 's to care for. He, beside
Some shape not visible, in power and pride
Approached, out of the dark, ginglingly near,
Nearer, passed close in the broad light, his ear
Crimson, eyeballs suffused, temples full-fraught,
Just a snatch of the rapid speech you caught,
And on he strode into the opposite dark,
Till presently the harsh heel's turn, a spark
I' the stone, and whirl of some loose embossed throng
That crashed against the angle aye so long
After the last, punctual to an amount
Of mailed great paces you could not but count,—
Prepared you for the pacing back again.

And by the snatches you might ascertain
That, Friedrich's Prefecture surmounted, left
By this alone in Italy, they cleft
Asunder, crushed together, at command
Of none, were free to break up Hildebrand,
Rebuild, he and Sordello, Charlemagne—
But garnished, Strength with Knowledge, "if we deign
"Accept that compromise and stoop to give
"Rome law, the Cæsar's Representative."
Enough, that the illimitable flood
Of triumphs after triumphs, understood
In its faint reflux (you shall hear) sufficed
Young Ecelin for appanage, enticed
Him on till, these long quiet in their graves,
He found 't was looked for that a whole life's braves
Should somehow be made good; so, weak and worn,
Must stagger up at Milan, one grey morn
Of the to-come, and fight his latest fight.
But, Salinguerra's prophecy at height—
He voluble with a raised arm and stiff,
A blaring voice, a blazing eye, as if
He had our very Italy to keep
Or cast away, or gather in a heap
To garrison the better—ay, his word
Was, "run the cucumber into a gourd,
"Drive Trent upon Apulia"—at their pitch
Who spied the continents and islands which
Grew mulberry leaves and sickles, in the map—
(Strange that three such confessions so should hap

To Palma, Dante spoke with in the clear
Amorous silence of the Swooning-sphere,—
Cunizza, as he called her! Never ask
Of Palma more! She sat, knowing her task
Was done, the labour of it,—for, success,
Concerned not Palma, passion's votaress)
Triumph at height, and thus Sordello crowned—
Above the passage suddenly a sound
Stops speech, stops walk: back shrinks Taurello, bids
With large involuntary asking lids,
Palma interpret. "'T is his own foot-stamp—
" Your hand! His summons! Nay, this idle damp
" Befits not!" Out they two reeled dizzily.
" Visconti 's strong at Milan," resumed he,
In the old, somewhat insignificant way—
(Was Palma wont, years afterward, to say)
As though the spirit's flight, sustained thus far,
Dropped at that very instant. Gone they are—
Palma, Taurello; Eglamor anon,
Ecelin,—only Naddo 's never gone!
—Labours, this moonrise, what the Master meant:
" Is Squarcialupo speckled?—purulent,
" I 'd say, but when was Providence put out?
" He carries somehow handily about
" His spite nor fouls himself!" Goito's vines
Stand like a cheat detected—stark rough lines,
The moon breaks through, a grey mean scale against
The vault where, this eve's Maiden, thou remain'st
Like some fresh martyr, eyes fixed—who can tell?

As Heaven, now all 's at end, did not so well,
Spite of the faith and victory, to leave
Its virgin quite to death in the lone eve.
While the persisting hermit-bee . . . ha ! wait
No longer : these in compass, forward fate !

BOOK THE SIXTH.

AT THE CLOSE OF A DAY OR A LIFE,

THE thought of Eglamor 's least like a thought,
And yet a false one, was, " Man shrinks to nought
" If matched with symbols of immensity ;
" Must quail, forsooth, before a quiet sky
" Or sea, too little for their quietude : "
And, truly, somewhat in Sordello's mood
Confirmed its speciousness, while eve slow sank
Down the near terrace to the farther bank,
And only one spot left out of the night
Glimmered upon the river opposite—
A breadth of watery heaven like a bay,
A sky-like space of water, ray for ray,
And star for star, one richness where they mixed
As this and that wing of an angel, fixed,
Tumultuary splendours folded in
To die. Nor turned he till Ferrara's din
(Say, the monotonous speech from a man's lip
Who lets some first and eager purpose slip
In a new fancy's birth ; the speech keeps on
Though elsewhere its informing soul be gone)
—Aroused him, surely offered succour. Fate
Paused with this eve ; ere she precipitate
Herself,—put off strange after-thoughts awhile,
That voice, those large hands, that portentous smile,—

What help to pierce the future as the past,
Lay in the plaining city?
And at last
The main discovery and prime concern,
All that just now imported him to learn,
His truth, like yonder slow moon to complete
Heaven, rose again, and, naked at his feet,
Lighted his old life's every shift and change,
Effort with counter-effort; nor the range
Of each looked wrong except wherein it checked,
Some other—which of these could he suspect,
Prying into them by the sudden blaze?
The real way seemed made up of all the ways—
Mood after mood of the one mind in him;
Tokens of the existence, bright or dim,
Of a transcendent all-embracing sense
Demanding only outward influence,
A soul, in Palma's phrase, above his soul,
Power to uplift his power,—this moon's control
Over the sea-depths,—and their mass had swept
Onward from the beginning and still kept
Its course: but years and years the sky above
Held none, and so, untasked of any love,
His sensitiveness idled, now amort,
Alive now, and, to sullenness or sport
Given wholly up, disposed itself anew
At every passing instigation, grew
And dwindled at caprice, in foam-showers spilt,
Wedge-like insisting, quivered now a gilt

Shield in the sunshine, now a blinding race
Of whitest ripples o'er the reef—found place
For much display; not gathered up and, hurled
Right from its heart, encompassing the world.
So had Sordello been, by consequence,
Without a function: others made pretence
To strength not half his own, yet had some core
Within, submitted to some moon, before
Them still, superior still whate'er their force,—
Were able therefore to fulfil a course,
Nor missed life's crown, authentic attribute.
To each who lives must be a certain fruit
Of having lived in his degree,—a stage,
Earlier or later in men's pilgrimage,
To stop at; and to this the spirits tend
Who, still discovering beauty without end,
Amass the scintillations, make one star
—Something unlike them, self-sustained, afar,—
And meanwhile nurse the dream of being blest
By winning it to notice and invest
Their souls with alien glory, some one day
Whene'er the nucleus, gathering shape alway,
Round to the perfect circle—soon or late,
According as themselves are formed to wait;
Whether mere human beauty will suffice
—The yellow hair and the luxurious eyes,
Or human intellect seem best, or each
Combine in some ideal form past reach
On earth, or else some shade of these, some aim,

Some love, hate even, take their place, the same,
And may be served—all this they do not lose,
Waiting for death to live, nor idly choose
What must be Hell—a progress thus pursued
Through all existence, still above the food
That 's offered them, still towering beyond
The widened range, in virtue of their bond
Of sovereignty. Not that a Palma's Love,
A Salinguerra's Hate, would equal prove
To swaying all Sordello: wherefore doubt
That love meet for such strength, some moon without
Would match his sea?—or fear, Good manifest,
Only the Best breaks faith?—Ah but the Best
Somehow eludes us ever, still might be
And is not! Crave we gems? No penury
Of their material round us! Pliant earth
And plastic flame—what balks the mage his birth
—Jacinth in balls or lodestone by the block?
Flinders enrich the strand, veins swell the rock;
Nought more! Ask creatures? Life 's i' the tempest,
thought
Clothes the keen hill-top, mid-day woods are fraught
With fervours: human forms are well enough!
But we had hoped, encouraged by the stuff
Profuse at nature's pleasure, men beyond
These men!—and thus, perchance, are over-fond
In arguing, from Good the Best, from force
Divided—force combined, an ocean's course
From this our sea whose mere intestine pants

Might seem at times sufficient to our wants.
—External power? If none be adequate
And he stand forth ordained (a prouder fate)
A law to his own sphere?—need to remove
All incompleteness, for that law, that love?
Nay, if all other laws be such, though veiled
In mercy to each vision that had failed
If unassisted by its want,—for lure,
Embodied? Stronger vision could endure
The unbodied want: no bauble for a truth!
The People were himself; and, by the ruth
At their condition, was he less impelled
To alter the discrepancy beheld,
Than if, from the sound Whole, a sickly Part
Subtracted were transformed, decked out with art,
Then palmed on him as alien woe—the Guelf
To succour, proud that he forsook himself?
No! All 's himself; all service, therefore, rates
Alike, nor serving one part, immolates
The rest: but all in time! "That lance of yours
" Makes havoc soon with Malek and his Moors,
" That buckler 's lined with many a giant's beard
" Ere long, our champion, be the lance upreared,
" The buckler wielded handsomely as now!
" But view your escort, bear in mind your vow,
" Count the pale tracts of sand to pass ere that,
" And, if you hope we struggle through the flat,
" Put lance and buckler by! Next half-month lacks
" Mere sturdy exercise of mace and axe

" To cleave this dismal brake of prickly-pear
" Which bristling holds Cydippe by the hair,
" Lames barefoot Agathon : this felled, we 'll try
" The picturesque achievements by and by—
" Next life !"

Ay, rally, mock, O People, urge
Your claims !—for thus he ventured, to the verge,
Push a vain mummery which perchance distrust
Of his fast-slipping resolution thrust
Likewise : accordingly the Crowd—(as yet
He had unconsciously contrived forget
I' the whole, to dwell o' the points . . . one might assuage
The signal horrors easier than engage
With a dim vulgar vast unobvious grief
Not to be fancied off, nor gained relief
In brilliant fits, cured by a happy quirk,
But by dim vulgar vast unobvious work
To correspond . . .) this Crowd then, forth they stood.
" And now content thy stronger vision, brood
" On thy bare want ; uncovered, turf by turf,
" Study the corpse-face thro' the taint-worms' scurf !"

Down sank the People's Then ; uprose their Now.
These sad ones render service to ! And how
Piteously little must that service prove
—Had surely proved in any case ! for, move
Each other obstacle away, let youth
Become aware it had surprised a truth
'T were service to impart—can truth be seized,
Settled forthwith, and, of the captive eased,

Its captor find fresh prey, since this alit
So happily, no gesture luring it,
The earnest of a flock to follow? Vain,
Most vain! a life to spend ere this he chain,
To the poor crowd's complacence; ere the crowd
Pronounce it captured, he descries a cloud
Its kin of twice the plume; which he, in turn,
If he shall live as many lives, may learn
How to secure: not else. Then Mantua called
Back to his mind how certain bards were thralled
—Buds blasted, but of breath more like perfume
Than Naddo's staring nosegay's carrion bloom;
Some insane rose that burnt heart out in sweets,
A spendthrift in the spring, no summer greets;
Some Dularete, drunk with truths and wine,
Grown bestial, dreaming how become divine.
Yet to surmount this obstacle, commence
With the commencement, merits crowning! Hence
Must truth be casual truth, elicited
In sparks so mean, at intervals dispread
So rarely, that 't is like at no one time
Of the world's story has not truth, the prime
Of truth, the very truth which, loosed, had hurled
The world's course right, been really in the world
—Content the while with some mean spark by dint
Of some chance-blow, the solitary hint
Of buried fire, which, rip its breast, would stream
Sky-ward!

Sordello's miserable gleam

Was looked for at the moment: he would dash
This badge, and all it brought, to earth,—abash
Taurello thus, perhaps persuade him wrest
The Kaiser from his purpose,—would attest
His own belief, in any case. Before
He dashes it however, think once more!
For, were that little, truly service? "Ay,
" I' the end, no doubt; but meantime? Plain you spy
" Its ultimate effect, but many flaws
" Of vision blur each intervening cause.
" Were the day's fraction clear as the life's sum
" Of service, Now as filled as the To-come
" With evidence of good—nor too minute
" A share to vie with evil! No dispute,
" 'T were fitliest maintain the Guelfs in rule:
" That makes your life's work: but you have to school
" Your day's work on these natures circumstanced
" Thus variously, which yet, as each advanced
" Or might impede the Guelf rule, must be moved
" Now, for the Then's sake,—hating what you loved,
" Loving old hatreds! Nor if one man bore
" Brand upon temples while his fellow wore
" The aureole, would it task you to decide:
" But, portioned duly out, the future vied
" Never with the unparcelled present! Smite
" Or spare so much on warrant all so slight?
" The present's complete sympathies to break,
" Aversions bear with, for a future's sake
" So feeble? Tito ruined through one speck,

" The Legate saved by his sole lightish fleck?
" This were work, true, but work performed at cost
" Of other work; aught gained here, elsewhere lost.
" For a new segment spoil an orb half-done?
" Rise with the People one step, and sink—one?
" Were it but one step, less than the whole face
" Of things, your novel duty bids erase!
" Harms to abolish! What, the prophet saith,
" The minstrel singeth vainly then? Old faith,
" Old courage, only borne because of harms,
" Were not, from highest to the lowest, charms?
" Flame may persist; but is not glare as staunch?
" Where the salt marshes stagnate, crystals branch;
" Blood dries to crimson; Evil 's beautified
" In every shape. Thrust Beauty then aside
" And banish Evil! Wherefore? After all,
" Is Evil a result less natural
" Than Good? For overlook the seasons' strife
" With tree and flower,—the hideous animal life,
" (Of which who seeks shall find a grinning taunt
" For his solution, and endure the vaunt
" Of nature's angel, as a child that knows
" Himself befooled, unable to propose
" Aught better than the fooling)—and but care
" For men, for the mere People then and there,—
" In these, could you but see that Good and Ill
" Claimed you alike! Whence rose their claim but still
" From Ill, as fruit of Ill? What else could knit
" You theirs but Sorrow? Any free from it

" Were also free from you! Whose happiness
" Could be distinguished in this morning's press
" Of miseries?—the fool's who passed a gibe
" 'On thee,' jeered he, 'so wedded to thy tribe,
" 'Thou carriest green and yellow tokens in
" 'Thy very face that thou art Ghibellin!'
" Much hold on you that fool obtained! Nay mount
" Yet higher—and upon men's own account
" Must Evil stay: for, what is joy?—to heave
" Up one obstruction more, and common leave
" What was peculiar, by such act destroy
" Itself; a partial death is every joy;
" The sensible escape, enfranchisement
" Of a sphere's essence: once the vexed—content,
" The cramped—at large, the growing circle—round,
" All 's to begin again—some novel bound
" To break, some new enlargement to entreat;
" The sphere though larger is not more complete.
" Now for Mankind's experience: who alone
" Might style the unobstructed world his own?
" Whom palled Goito with its perfect things?
" Sordello's self: whereas for Mankind springs
" Salvation by each hindrance interposed.
" They climb; life's view is not at once disclosed
" To creatures caught up, on the summit left,
" Heaven plain above them, yet of wings bereft:
" But lower laid, as at the mountain's foot.
" So, range on range, the girdling forests shoot
" 'Twixt your plain prospect and the throngs who scale

" Height after height, and pierce mists, veil by veil,
" Heartened with each discovery; in their soul,
" The Whole they seek by Parts—but, found that Whole,
" Could they revert, enjoy past gains? The space
" Of time you judge so meagre to embrace
" The Parts, were more than plenty, once attained
" The Whole, to quite exhaust it: nought were gained
" But leave to look—not leave to do: Beneath
" Soon sates the looker—look Above, and Death
" Tempts ere a tithe of Life be tasted. Live
" First, and die soon enough, Sordello! Give
" Body and spirit the first right they claim,
" And pasture thee on a voluptuous shame
" That thou, a pageant-city's denizen,
" Art neither vilely lodged midst Lombard men—
" Canst force joy out of sorrow, seem to truck
" Thine attributes away for sordid muck,
" Yet manage from that very muck educe
" Gold; then subject nor scruple, to thy cruce
" The world's discardings! Though real ingots pay
" Thy pains, the clods that yielded them are clay
" To all save thee,—would clay remain, though quenched
" Thy purging-fire; who's robbed then? Had you wrenched
" An ampler treasure forth!—As 't is, they crave
" A share that ruins you and will not save
" Them. Why should sympathy command you quit
" The course that makes your joy, nor will remit
" Their woe? Would all arrive at joy? Reverse

"The order (time instructs you) nor coerce
"Each unit till, some predetermined mode,
"The total be emancipated; men's road
"Is one, men's times of travel many; thwart
"No enterprising soul's precocious start
"Before the general march! If slow or fast
"All straggle up to the same point at last,
"Why grudge your having gained, a month ago,
"The brakes at balm-shed, asphodels in blow,
"While they were landlocked? Speed their Then, but
how
"This badge would suffer, you improve your Now!"
His time of action for, against, or with
Our world (I labour to extract the pith
Of this his problem) grew, that even-tide,
Gigantic with its power of joy, beside
The world's eternity of impotence
To profit, though at his whole joy's expense.
"Make nothing of my day because so brief?
"Rather make more: instead of joy, use grief
"Before its novelty have time subside!
"Wait not for the late savour, leave untried
"Virtue, the creaming honey-wine, quick squeeze
"Vice like a biting spirit from the lees
"Of life! Together let wrath, hatred, lust,
"All tyrannies in every shape, be thrust
"Upon this Now, which time may reason out
"As mischiefs, far from benefits, no doubt;
"But long ere then Sordello will have slipped

"Away; you teach him at Goito's crypt,
"There's a blank issue to that fiery thrill.
"Stirring, the few cope with the many, still:
"So much of sand as, quiet, makes a mass
"Unable to produce three tufts of grass,
"Shall, troubled by the whirlwind, render void
"The whole calm glebe's endeavour: be employed!
"And e'en though somewhat smart the Crowd for this,
"Contribute each his pang to make your bliss,
"'T is but one pang—one blood-drop to the bowl
"Which brimful tempts the sluggish asp uncowl
"At last, stains ruddily the dull red cape,
"And, kindling orbs grey as the unripe grape
"Before, avails forthwith to disentrance
"The portent, soon to lead a mystic dance
"Among you! For, who sits alone in Rome?
"Have those great hands indeed hewn out a home,
"And set me there to live? Oh life, life-breath,
"Life-blood,—ere sleep, come travail, life ere death!
"This life stream on my soul, direct, oblique,
"But alway streaming! Hindrances? They pique:
"Helps? such . . . but why repeat, my soul o'ertops
"Each height, then every depth profoundlier drops?
"Enough that I can live, and would live! Wait
"For some transcendent life reserved by Fate
"To follow this? Oh, never! Fate, I trust
"The same, my soul to; for, as who flings dust,
"Perchance (so facile was the deed) she chequed
"The void with these materials to affect

"My soul diversely: these consigned anew
"To nought by death, what marvel if she threw
"A second and superber spectacle
"Before me? What may serve for sun, what still
"Wander a moon above me? What else wind
"About me like the pleasures left behind,
"And how shall some new flesh that is not flesh
"Cling to me? What's new laughter? Soothes the fresh
"Sleep like sleep? Fate's exhaustless for my sake
"In brave resource: but whether bids she slake
"My thirst at this first rivulet, or count
"No draught worth lip save from the rocky fount
"Above i' the clouds, while here she's provident
"Of pure loquacious pearl, the soft tree-tent
"Guards, with its face of reate and sedge, nor fail
"The silver globules and gold-sparkling grail
"At bottom? Oh, 't were too absurd to slight
"For the hereafter the to-day's delight!
"Quench thirst at this, then seek next well-spring: wear
"Home-lilies ere strange lotus in my hair!
"Here is the Crowd, whom I with freest heart
"Offer to serve, contented for my part
"To give life up in service,—only grant
"That I do serve; if otherwise, why want
"Aught further of me? If men cannot choose
"But set aside life, why should I refuse
"The gift? I take it—I, for one, engage
"Never to falter through my pilgrimage—
"Nor end it howling that the stock or stone

" Were enviable, truly : I, for one,
" Will praise the world, you style mere anteroom
" To the palace—be it so ! shall I assume
" —My foot the courtly gait, my tongue the trope,
" My mouth the smirk, before the doors fly ope
" One moment ? What ? with guarders row on row,
" Gay swarms of varletry that come and go,
" Pages to dice with, waiting-girls unlace
" The plackets of, pert claimants help displace,
" Heart-heavy suitors get a rank for,—laugh
" At yon sleek parasite, break his own staff
" 'Cross Beetle-brows the Usher's shoulder,—why,
" Admitted to the presence by and by,
" Should thought of having lost these make me grieve
" Among new joys I reach, for joys I leave ?
" Cool citrine-crystals, fierce pyropus-stone,
" Are floor-work there ! But do I let alone
" That black-eyed peasant in the vestibule
" Once and for ever ?—Floor-work ? No such fool !
" Rather, were heaven to forestal earth, I 'd say
" I, is it, must be blessed ? Then, my own way
" Bless me ! Give firmer arm and fleeter foot,
" I 'll thank you : but to no mad wings transmute
" These limbs of mine—our greensward was so soft !
" Nor camp I on the thunder-cloud aloft :
" We feel the bliss distinctlier, having thus
" Engines subservient, not mixed up with us.
" Better move palpably through heaven : nor, freed
" Of flesh, forsooth, from space to space proceed

"'Mid flying synods of worlds! No: in heaven's marge
"Show Titan still, recumbent o'er his targe
"Solid with stars—the Centaur at his game,
"Made tremulously out in hoary flame!
"Life! Yet the very cup whose extreme dull
"Dregs, even, I would quaff, was dashed, at full,
"Aside so oft; the death I fly, revealed
"So oft a better life this life concealed,
"And which sage, champion, martyr, through each path
"Have hunted fearlessly—the horrid bath,
"The crippling-irons and the fiery chair.
"'T was well for them; let me become aware
"As they, and I relinquish life, too! Let
"What masters life disclose itself! Forget
"Vain ordinances, I have one appeal—
"I feel, am what I feel, know what I feel;
"So much is truth to me. What Is, then? Since
"One object, viewed diversely, may evince
"Beauty and ugliness—this way attract,
"That way repel,—why gloze upon the fact?
"Why must a single of the sides be right?
"What bids choose this and leave the opposite?
"Where 's abstract Right for me?—in youth endued
"With Right still present, still to be pursued,
"Thro' all the interchange of circles, rife
"Each with its proper law and mode of life,
"Each to be dwelt at ease in: where, to sway
"Absolute with the Kaiser, or obey
"Implicit with his serf of fluttering heart,

"Or, like a sudden thought of God's, to start
"Up, Brutus in the presence, then go shout
"That some should pick the unstrung jewels out—
"Each, well!"

And, as in moments when the past
Gave partially enfranchisement, he cast
Himself quite through mere secondary states
Of his soul's essence, little loves and hates,
Into the mid deep yearnings overlaid
By these; as who should pierce hill, plain, grove, glade,
And on into the very nucleus probe,
That first determined there exist a globe.
As that were easiest, half the globe dissolved,
So seemed Sordello's closing-truth evolved
By his flesh-half's break up; the sudden swell
Of his expanding soul showed Ill and Well,
Sorrow and Joy, Beauty and Ugliness,
Virtue and Vice, the Larger and the Less,
All qualities, in fine, recorded here,
Might be but modes of Time and this one sphere,
Urgent on these, but not of force to bind
Eternity, as Time—as Matter—Mind,
If Mind, Eternity, should choose assert
Their attributes within a Life: thus girt
With circumstance, next change beholds them cinct
Quite otherwise—with Good and Ill distinct,
Joys, sorrows, tending to a like result—
Contrived to render easy, difficult,
This or the other course of . . . what new bond

In place of flesh may stop their flight beyond
Its new sphere, as that course does harm or good
To its arrangements. Once this understood,
As suddenly he felt himself alone,
Quite out of Time and this world; all was known.
What made the secret of his past despair?
—Most imminent when he seemed most aware
Of his own self-sufficiency; made mad
By craving to expand the power he had,
And not new power to be expanded?—just
This made it; Soul on Matter being thrust,
Joy comes when so much Soul is wreaked in Time
On Matter,—let the Soul's attempt sublime
Matter beyond the scheme and so prevent
By more or less that deed's accomplishment,
And Sorrow follows: Sorrow how avoid?
Let the employer match the thing employed,
Fit to the finite his infinity,
And thus proceed for ever, in degree
Changed but in kind the same, still limited
To the appointed circumstance and dead
To all beyond. A sphere is but a sphere;
Small, Great, are merely terms we bandy here;
Since to the spirit's absoluteness all
Are like. Now, of the present sphere we call
Life, are conditions; take but this among
Many; the body was to be so long
Youthful, no longer: but, since no control
Tied to that body's purposes his soul,

She chose to understand the body's trade
More than the body's self—had fain conveyed
Her boundless, to the body's bounded lot.
Hence, the soul permanent, the body not,—
Scarce the one minute for enjoying here,—
The soul must needs instruct her weak compeer,
Run o'er its capabilities and wring
A joy thence, she held worth experiencing:
Which, far from half discovered even,—lo,
The minute gone, the body's power let go
Apportioned to that joy's acquirement! Broke
Morning o'er earth, he yearned for all it woke—
From the volcano's vapour-flag, winds hoist
Black o'er the spread of sea,—down to the moist
Dale's silken barley-spikes sullied with rain,
Swayed earthwards, heavily to rise again—
The Small, a sphere as perfect as the Great
To the soul's absoluteness. Meditate
Too long on such a morning's cluster-chord
And the whole music it was framed afford,—
The chord's might half discovered, what should pluck
One string, his finger, was found palsy-struck.
And then no marvel if the spirit, shown
A saddest sight—the body lost alone
Through her officious proffered help, deprived
Of this and that enjoyment Fate contrived,—
Virtue, Good, Beauty, each allowed slip hence,—
Vain-gloriously were fain, for recompense,
To stem the ruin even yet, protract

The body's term, supply the power it lacked
From her infinity, compel it learn
These qualities were only Time's concern,
And body may, with spirit helping, barred—
Advance the same, vanquished—obtain reward,
Reap joy where sorrow was intended grow,
Of Wrong make Right, and turn Ill Good below.
And the result is, the poor body soon
Sinks under what was meant a wondrous boon,
Leaving its bright accomplice all aghast.
So much was plain then, proper in the past;
To be complete for, satisfy the whole
Series of spheres—Eternity, his soul
Exceeded, so was incomplete for, each
Single sphere—Time. But does our knowledge reach
No farther? Is the cloud of hindrance broke
But by the failing of the fleshly yoke,
Its loves and hates, as now when death lets soar
Sordello, self-sufficient as before,
Though during the mere space that shall elapse
'Twixt his enthralment in new bonds, perhaps?
Must life be ever just escaped, which should
Have been enjoyed?—nay, might have been and would,
Each purpose ordered right—the soul's no whit
Beyond the body's purpose under it—
Like yonder breadth of watery heaven, a bay,
And that sky-space of water, ray for ray
And star for star, one richness where they mixed
As this and that wing of an angel, fixed,

Tumultuary splendours folded in
To die—would soul, proportioned thus, begin
Exciting discontent, or surelier quell
The body if, aspiring, it rebel?
But how so order life? Still brutalize
The soul, the sad world's way, with muffled eyes
To all that was before, all that shall be
After this sphere—and every quality
Save some sole and immutable Great and Good
And Beauteous whither fate has loosed its hood
To follow? Never may some soul see All
—The Great Before and After, and the Small
Now, yet be saved by this the simplest lore,
And take the single course prescribed before,
As the king-bird with ages on his plumes
Travels to die in his ancestral glooms?
But where descry the Love that shall select
That course? Here is a soul whom, to affect,
Nature has plied with all her means, from trees
And flowers e'en to the Multitude!—and these,
Decides he save or no? One word to end!
Ah my Sordello, I this once befriend
And speak for you. Of a Power above you still
Which, utterly incomprehensible,
Is out of rivalry, which thus you can
Love, tho' unloving all conceived by man—
What need! And of—none the minutest duct
To that out-nature, nought that would instruct
And so let rivalry begin to live—

But of a Power its representative
Who, being for authority the same,
Communication different, should claim
A course, the first chose and this last revealed—
This Human clear, as that Divine concealed—
What utter need!
What has Sordello found?
Or can his spirit go the mighty round,
End where poor Eglamor begun?—So, says
Old fable, the two eagles went two ways
About the world: where, in the midst, they met,
Though on a shifting waste of sand, men set
Jove's temple. Quick, what has Sordello found?
For they approach—approach—that foot's rebound . .
Palma? No, Salinguerra though in mail;
They mount, have reached the threshold, dash the veil
Aside—and you divine who sat there dead,
Under his foot the badge: still, Palma said,
A triumph lingering in the wide eyes,
Wider than some spent swimmer's if he spies
Help from above in his extreme despair,
And, head far back on shoulder thrust, turns there
With short, quick, passionate cry: as Palma pressed
In one great kiss, her lips upon his breast,
It beat.
By this, the hermit-bee has stopped
His day's toil at Góito: the new-cropped
Dead vine-leaf answers, now 't is eve, he bit,
Twirled so, and filed all day: the mansion 's fit,

God counselled for. As easy guess the word
That passed betwixt them, and become the third
To the soft small unfrighted bee, as tax
Him with one fault—so, no remembrance racks
Of the stone maidens and the font of stone
He, creeping through the crevice, leaves alone.
Alas, my friend, alas Sordello, whom
Anon they laid within that old font-tomb,
And, yet again, alas!
And now is 't worth
Our while bring back to mind, much less set forth
How Salinguerra extricates himself
Without Sordello? Ghibellin and Guelf
May fight their fiercest out? If Richard sulked
In durance or the Marquis paid his mulct,
Who cares, Sordello gone? The upshot, sure,
Was peace; our chief made some frank overture
That prospered; compliment fell thick and fast
On its disposer, and Taurello passed
With foe and friend for an outstripping soul,
Nine days at least. Then,—fairly reached the goal,—
He, by one effort, blotted the great hope
Out of his mind, nor further tried to cope
With Este, that mad evening's style, but sent
Away the Legate and the League, content
No blame at least the brothers had incurred,
—Dispatched a message to the Monk, he heard
Patiently first to last, scarce shivered at,
Then curled his limbs up on his wolfskin mat

And ne'er spoke more,—informed the Ferrarese
He but retained their rule so long as these
Lingered in pupilage,—and last, no mode
Apparent else of keeping safe the road
From Germany direct to Lombardy
For Friedrich,—none, that is, to guarantee
The faith and promptitude of who should next
Obtain Sofia's dowry,—sore perplexed—
(Sofia being youngest of the tribe
Of daughters, Ecelin was wont to bribe
The envious magnates with—nor, since he sent
Henry of Egna this fair child, had Trent
Once failed the Kaiser's purposes—" we lost
" Egna last year, and who takes Egna's post—
" Opens the Lombard gate if Friedrich knock?")
Himself espoused the Lady of the Rock
In pure necessity, and, so destroyed
His slender last of chances, quite made void
Old prophecy, and spite of all the schemes
Overt and covert, youth's deeds, age's dreams,
Was sucked into Romano. And so hushed
He up this evening's work that, when 't was brushed
Somehow against by a blind chronicle
Which, chronicling whatever woe befell
Ferrara, noted this the obscure woe
Of " Salinguerra's sole son Giacomo
" Deceased, fatuous and doting, ere his sire,"
The townsfolk rubbed their eyes, could but admire
Which of Sofia's five was meant.

The chaps
Of earth's dead hope were tardy to collapse,
Obliterated not the beautiful
Distinctive features at a crash : but dull
And duller these, next year, as Guelfs withdrew
Each to his stronghold. Then (securely too
Ecelin at Campese slept ; close by,
Who likes may see him in Solagna lie,
With cushioned head and gloved hand to denote
The cavalier he was)—then his heart smote
Young Ecelin at last ; long since adult,
And, save Vicenza's business, what result
In blood and blaze ? (So hard to intercept
Sordello till his plain withdrawal !) Stepped,
Then its new lord on Lombardy. I' the nick
Of time when Ecelin and Alberic
Closed with Taurello, come precisely news
That in Verona half the souls refuse
Allegiance to the Marquis and the Count—
Have cast them from a throne they bid him mount,
Their Podestà, thro' his ancestral worth.
Ecelin flew there, and the town henceforth
Was wholly his—Taurello sinking back
From temporary station to a track
That suited. News received of this acquist,
Friedrich did come to Lombardy : who missed
Taurello then ? Another year : they took
Vicenza, left the Marquis scarce a nook
For refuge, and, when hundreds two or three

Of Guelfs conspired to call themselves " The Free,"
Opposing Alberic,—vile Bassanese,—
(Without Sordello !)—Ecelin at ease
Slaughtered them so observably, that oft
A little Salinguerra looked with soft
Blue eyes up, asked his sire the proper age
To get appointed his proud uncle's page.
More years passed, and that sire had dwindled down
To a mere showy turbulent soldier, grown
Better through age, his parts still in repute,
Subtle—how else ?—but hardly so astute
As his contemporaneous friends professed ;
Undoubtedly a brawler : for the rest,
Known by each neighbour, and allowed for, let
Keep his incorrigible ways, nor fret
Men who had missed their boyhood's bugbear : " trap
" The ostrich, suffer our bald osprey flap
" A battered pinion !"—was the word. In fine,
One flap too much and Venice's marine
Was meddled with ; no overlooking that !
She captured him in his Ferrara, fat
And florid at a banquet, more by fraud
Than force, to speak the truth ; there 's slender laud
Ascribed you for assisting eighty years
To pull his death on such a man ; fate shears
The life-cord prompt enough whose last fine threads
You fritter : so, presiding his board-head,
The old smile, your assurance all went well
With Friedrich (as if he were like to tell !)

In rushed (a plan contrived before) our friends,
Made some pretence at fighting, some amends
For the shame done his eighty years—(apart
The principle, none found it in his heart
To be much angry with Taurello)—gained
Their galleys with the prize, and what remained
But carry him to Venice for a show?
—Set him, as 't were, down gently—free to go
His gait, inspect our square, pretend observe
The swallows soaring their eternal curve
'Twixt Theodore and Mark, if citizens
Gathered importunately, fives and tens,
To point their children the Magnifico,
All but a monarch once in firm-land, go
His gait among them now—"it took, indeed,
"Fully this Ecelin to supersede
"That man," remarked the seniors. Singular!
Sordello's inability to bar
Rivals the stage, that evening, mainly brought
About by his strange disbelief that aught
Was ever to be done,—this thrust the Twain
Under Taurello's tutelage,—whom, brain
And heart and hand, he forthwith in one rod
Indissolubly bound to baffle God
Who loves the world—and thus allowed the thin
Grey wizened dwarfish devil Ecelin,
And massy-muscled big-boned Alberic
(Mere man, alas!) to put his problem quick
To demonstration—prove wherever 's will

To do, there's plenty to be done, or ill
Or good. Anointed, then, to rend and rip—
Kings of the gag and flesh-hook, screw and whip,
They plagued the world: a touch of Hildebrand
(So far from obsolete!) made Lombards band
Together, cross their coats as for Christ's cause,
And saving Milan win the world's applause.
Ecelin perished: and I think grass grew
Never so pleasant as in Valley Rù
By San Zenon where Alberic in turn
Saw his exasperated captors burn
Seven children and their mother; then, regaled
So far, tied on to a wild horse, was trailed
To death through raunce and bramble-bush. I take
God's part and testify that 'mid the brake
Wild o'er his castle on the pleasant knoll,
You hear its one tower left, a belfry, toll—
The earthquake spared it last year, laying flat
The modern church beneath,—no harm in that!
Chirrups the contumacious grasshopper,
Rustles the lizard and the cushats chirre
Above the ravage: there, at deep of day
A week since, heard I the old Canon say
He saw with his own eyes a barrow burst
And Alberic's huge skeleton unhearsed
Only five years ago. He added, "June's
"The month for carding off our first cocoons
"The silkworms fabricate"—a double news,
Nor he nor I could tell the worthier. Choose!

And Naddo gone, all 's gone ; not Eglamor !
Believe, I knew the face I waited for,
A guest my spirit of the golden courts !
Oh strange to see how, despite ill-reports,
Disuse, some wear of years, that face retained
Its joyous look of love ! Suns waxed and waned,
And still my spirit held an upward flight,
Spiral on spiral, gyres of life and light
More and more gorgeous—ever that face there
The last admitted ! crossed, too, with some care
As perfect triumph were not sure for all,
But, on a few, enduring damp must fall,
—A transient struggle, haply a painful sense
Of the inferior nature's clinging—whence
Slight starting tears easily wiped away,
Fine jealousies soon stifled in the play
Of irrepressible admiration—not
Aspiring, all considered, to their lot
Who ever, just as they prepare ascend
Spiral on spiral, wish thee well, impend
Thy frank delight at their exclusive track,
That upturned fervid face and hair put back !
Is there no more to say ? He of the rhymes—
Many a tale, of this retreat betimes,
Was born : Sordello die at once for men ?
The Chroniclers of Mantua tired their pen
Telling how *Sordello Prince Visconti* saved
Mantua, and elsewhere notably behaved—
Who thus, by fortune ordering events,

Passed with posterity, to all intents,
For just the god he never could become.
As Knight, Bard, Gallant, men were never dumb
In praise of him : while what he should have been,
Could be, and was not—the one step too mean
For him to take,—we suffer at this day
Because of : Ecelin had pushed away
Its chance ere Dante could arrive and take
That step Sordello spurned, for the world's sake :
He did much—but Sordello's chance was gone.
Thus, had Sordello dared that step alone,
Apollo had been compassed—'t was a fit
He wished should go to him, not he to it
—As one content to merely be supposed
Singing or fighting elsewhere, while he dozed
Really at home—one who was chiefly glad
To have achieved the few real deeds he had,
Because that way assured they were not worth
Doing, so spared from doing them henceforth—
A tree that covets fruitage and yet tastes
Never itself, itself. Had he embraced
Their cause then, men had plucked Hesperian fruit
And, praising that, just thrown him in to boot
All he was anxious to appear, but scarce
Solicitous to be. A sorry farce
Such life is, after all ! Cannot I say
He lived for some one better thing ? this way.—
Lo, on a heathy brown and nameless hill
By sparkling Asolo, in mist and chill,

Morning just up, higher and higher runs
A child barefoot and rosy. See ! the sun 's
On the square castle's inner-court's low wall
Like the chine of some extinct animal
Half turned to earth and flowers; and through the haze
(Save where some slender patches of grey maize
Are to be overleaped) that boy has crossed
The whole hill-side of dew and powder-frost
Matting the balm and mountain camomile.
Up and up goes he, singing all the while
Some unintelligible words to beat
The lark, God's poet, swooning at his feet,
So worsted is he at "the few fine locks
" Stained like pale honey oozed from topmost rocks
" Sunblanched the livelong summer,"—all that 's left
Of the Goito lay ! And thus bereft,
Sleep and forget, Sordello ! In effect
He sleeps, the feverish poet—I suspect
Not utterly companionless ; but, friends,
Wake up ! The ghost 's gone, and the story ends
I'd fain hope, sweetly ; seeing, peri or ghoul,
That spirits are conjectured fair or foul,
Evil or good, judicious authors think,
According as they vanish in a stink
Or in a perfume. Friends, be frank ! ye snuff
Civet, I warrant. Really ? Like enough !
Merely the savour's rareness ; any nose
May ravage with impunity a rose :

Rifle a musk-pod and 't will ache like yours!
I 'd tell you that same pungency ensures
An after-gust, but that were overbold.
Who would has heard Sordello's story told.

/. Sie einzelnen Artikel in Berodot.

x a musk pod has a pungent. ammoniacal odour
Musk requires to be smelt in minute quantity
Sordello's story too powerful a dose for read-
ing at one sitting.

PIPPA PASSES.

A DRAMA.

I DEDICATE MY BEST INTENTIONS, IN THIS POEM,

ADMIRINGLY TO THE AUTHOR OF 'ION,'

AFFECTIONATELY TO MR. SERJEANT TALFOURD.

R. B.

London, 1841.

PIPPA PASSES.

NEW YEAR'S DAY AT ASOLO IN THE TREVISAN. *A large mean airy chamber.* *A girl,* PIPPA, *from the silk-mills, springing out of bed.*

DAY!
Faster and more fast,
O'er night's brim, day boils at last;
Boils, pure gold, o'er the cloud-cup's brim
Where spurting and suppressed it lay;
For not a froth-flake touched the rim
Of yonder gap in the solid gray
Of the eastern cloud, an hour away;
But forth one wavelet, then another, curled,
Till the whole sunrise, not to be suppressed,
Rose, reddened, and its seething breast
Flickered in bounds, grew gold, then overflowed the world.

Oh, Day, if I squander a wavelet of thee,
A mite of my twelve-hours' treasure,

The least of thy gazes or glances,
(Be they grants thou art bound to or gifts above measure)
One of thy choices or one of thy chances,
(Be they tasks God imposed thee or freaks at thy pleasure)
—My Day, if I squander such labour or leisure,
Then shame fall on Asolo, mischief on me !

Thy long blue solemn hours serenely flowing,
Whence earth, we feel, gets steady help and good—
Thy fitful sunshine-minutes, coming, going,
As if earth turned from work in gamesome mood—
All shall be mine ! But thou must treat me not
As the prosperous are treated, those who live
At hand here, and enjoy the higher lot,
In readiness to take what thou wilt give,
And free to let alone what thou refusest ;
For, Day, my holiday, if thou ill-usest
Me, who am only Pippa,—old-year's sorrow,
Cast off last night, will come again to-morrow :
Whereas, if thou prove gentle, I shall borrow
Sufficient strength of thee for new-year's sorrow.
All other men and women that this earth
Belongs to, who all days alike possess,
Make general plenty cure particular dearth,
Get more joy one way, if another, less :
Thou art my single day, God lends to leaven
What were all earth else, with a feel of heaven,—

Sole light that helps me through the year, thy sun's!
Try now! Take Asolo's Four Happiest Ones—
And let thy morning rain on that superb
Great haughty Ottima; can rain disturb
Her Sebald's homage? All the while thy rain
Beats fiercest on her shrub-house window-pane,
He will but press the closer, breathe more warm
Against her cheek; how should she mind the storm?
And, morning past, if mid-day shed a gloom
O'er Jules and Phene,—what care bride and groom
Save for their dear selves? 'T is their marriage-day;
And while they leave church and go home their way,
Hand clasping hand, within each breast would be
Sunbeams and pleasant weather spite of thee.
Then, for another trial, obscure thy eve
With mist,—will Luigi and his mother grieve—
The lady and her child, unmatched, forsooth,
She in her age, as Luigi in his youth,
For true content? The cheerful town, warm, close
And safe, the sooner that thou art morose,
Receives them. And yet once again, outbreak
In storm at night on Monsignor, they make
Such stir about,—whom they expect from Rome
To visit Asolo, his brothers' home,
And say here masses proper to release
A soul from pain,—what storm dares hurt his peace?
Calm would he pray, with his own thoughts to ward
Thy thunder off, nor want the angels' guard.
But Pippa—just one such mischance would spoil

Her day that lightens the next twelvemonth's toil
At wearisome silk-winding, coil on coil !
And here I let time slip for nought !
Aha, you foolhardy sunbeam, caught
With a single splash from my ewer !
You that would mock the best pursuer,
Was my basin over-deep ?
One splash of water ruins you asleep,
And up, up, fleet your brilliant bits
Wheeling and counterwheeling,
Reeling, broken beyond healing :
Now grow together on the ceiling !
That will task your wits.
Whoever it was quenched fire first, hoped to see
Morsel after morsel flee
As merrily, as giddily . . .
Meantime, what lights my sunbeam on,
Where settles by degrees the radiant cripple ?
Oh, is it surely blown, my martagon ?
New-blown and ruddy as St. Agnes' nipple,
Plump as the flesh-bunch on some Turk bird's poll !
Be sure if corals, branching 'neath the ripple
Of ocean, bud there,—fairies watch unroll
Such turban-flowers ; I say, such lamps disperse
Thick red flame through that dusk green universe !
I am queen of thee, floweret !
And each fleshy blossom
Preserve I not—(safer
Than leaves that embower it,

Or shells that embosom)
—From weevil and chafer?
Laugh through my pane then; solicit the bee;
Gibe him, be sure; and, in midst of thy glee,
Love thy queen, worship me!

—Worship whom else? For am I not, this day,
Whate'er I please? What shall I please to-day?
My morn, noon, eve and night—how spend my day?
To-morrow I must be Pippa who winds silk,
The whole year round, to earn just bread and milk:
But, this one day, I have leave to go,
And play out my fancy's fullest games;
I may fancy all day—and it shall be so—
That I taste of the pleasures, am called by the names
Of the Happiest Four in our Asolo!

See! Up the Hill-side yonder, through the morning,
Some one shall love me, as the world calls love:
I am no less than Ottima, take warning!
The gardens, and the great stone house above,
And other house for shrubs, all glass in front,
Are mine; where Sebald steals, as he is wont,
To court me, while old Luca yet reposes:
And therefore, till the shrub-house door uncloses,
I . . . what now?—give abundant cause for prate
About me—Ottima, I mean—of late,
Too bold, too confident she'll still face down

The spitefullest of talkers in our town.
How we talk in the little town below !

But love, love, love—there 's better love, I know !
This foolish love was only day's first offer ;
I choose my next love to defy the scoffer :
For do not our Bride and Bridegroom sally
Out of Possagno church at noon ?
Their house looks over Orcana valley :
Why should not I be the bride as soon
As Ottima? For I saw, beside,
Arrive last night that little bride—
Saw, if you call it seeing her, one flash
Of the pale snow-pure cheek and black bright tresses,
Blacker than all except the black eyelash ;
I wonder she contrives those lids no dresses !
—So strict was she, the veil
Should cover close her pale
Pure cheeks—a bride to look at and scarce touch,
Scarce touch, remember, Jules ! For are not such
Used to be tended, flower-like, every-feature,
As if one's breath would fray the lily of a creature ?
A soft and easy life these ladies lead :
Whiteness in us were wonderful indeed.
Oh, save that brow its virgin dimness,
Keep that foot its lady primness,
Let those ancles never swerve
From their exquisite reserve,
Yet have to trip along the streets like me,
All but naked to the knee !

How will she ever grant her Jules a bliss
So startling as her real first infant kiss?
Oh, no—not envy, this!

—Not envy, sure!—for if you gave me
Leave to take or to refuse,
In earnest, do you think I 'd choose
That sort of new love to enslave me?
Mine should have lapped me round from the beginning;
As little fear of losing it as winning:
Lovers grow cold, men learn to hate their wives,
And only parents' love can last our lives.
At eve the Son and Mother, gentle pair,
Commune inside our turret; what prevents
My being Luigi? While that mossy lair
Of lizards through the winter-time, is stirred
With each to each imparting sweet intents
For this new-year, as brooding bird to bird—
(For I observe of late, the evening walk
Of Luigi and his mother, always ends
Inside our ruined turret, where they talk,
Calmer than lovers, yet more kind than friends)
—Let me be cared about, kept out of harm,
And schemed for, safe in love as with a charm;
Let me be Luigi! If I only knew
What was my mother's face—my father, too!
Nay, if you come to that, best love of all
Is God's; then why not have God's love befall
Myself as, in the Palace by the Dome,

Monsignor?—who to-night will bless the home
Of his dead brother; and God will bless in turn
That heart which beats, those eyes which mildly burn
With love for all men: I, to-night at least,
Would be that holy and beloved priest.

Now wait!—even I already seem to share
In God's love: what does New-year's hymn declare?
What other meaning do these verses bear?

All service ranks the same with God:
If now, as formerly he trod
Paradise, his presence fills
Our earth, each only as God wills
Can work—God's puppets, best and worst,
Are we; there is no last nor first.

Say not "a small event!" Why "small?"
Costs it more pain that this, ye call
A "great event," should come to pass,
Than that? Untwine me from the mass
Of deeds which make up life, one deed
Power shall fall short in or exceed!

And more of it, and more of it!—oh yes—
I will pass each, and see their happiness,
And envy none—being just as great, no doubt,
Useful to men, and dear to God, as they!
A pretty thing to care about
So mightily, this single holiday!

But let the sun shine! Wherefore repine?
—With thee to lead me, O Day of mine,
Down the grass-path grey with dew,
Under the pine-wood, blind with boughs,
Where the swallow never flew
Nor yet cicala dared carouse—
No, dared carouse! [*She enters the street.*

I.—MORNING. *Up the Hill-side, inside the Shrub-house.* LUCA'S *Wife,* OTTIMA, *and her Paramour, the German* SEBALD.

Seb. [*sings.*] *Let the watching lids wink!*
Day 's a-blaze with eyes, think!
Deep into the night, drink!

Otti. Night? Such may be your Rhine-land nights perhaps;
But this blood-red beam through the shutter's chink
—We call such light, the morning: let us see!
Mind how you grope your way, though! How these tall
Naked geraniums straggle! Push the lattice
Behind that frame!—Nay, do I bid you?—Sebald,
It shakes the dust down on me! Why, of course
The slide-bolt catches. Well, are you content,
Or must I find you something else to spoil?
Kiss and be friends, my Sebald! Is it full morning?
Oh, don't speak then!

Seb. Ay, thus it used to be!
Ever your house was, I remember, shut

Till mid-day ; I observed that, as I strolled
On mornings through the vale here ; country girls
Were noisy, washing garments in the brook,
Hinds drove the slow white oxen up the hills :
But no, your house was mute, would ope no eye !
And wisely : you were plotting one thing there,
Nature, another outside. I looked up—
Rough white wood shutters, rusty iron bars,
Silent as death, blind in a flood of light.
Oh, I remember !—and the peasants laughed
And said, "The old man sleeps with the young wife."
This house was his, this chair, this window—his !

Otti. Ah, the clear morning ! I can see St. Mark's :
That black streak is the belfry. Stop : Vicenza
Should lie . . . there 's Padua, plain enough, that blue !
Look o'er my shoulder, follow my finger !

Seb. Morning ?
It seems to me a night with a sun added.
Where 's dew, where 's freshness ? That bruised plant,
I bruised
In getting through the lattice yestereve,
Droops as it did. See, here 's my elbow's mark
In the dust on the sill.

Otti. Oh, shut the lattice, pray !

Seb. Let me lean out ! I cannot scent blood here,
Foul as the morn may be.
There, shut the world out !
How do you feel now, Ottima ? There, curse
The world and all outside ! Let us throw off

This mask : how do you bear yourself? Let 's out
With all of it !

Otti. Best never speak of it.

Seb. Best speak again and yet again of it,
Till words cease to be more than words. "His blood,"
For instance—let those two words mean "His blood"
And nothing more. Notice, I 'll say them now,
"His blood."

Otti. Assuredly if I repented
The deed—

Seb. Repent? Who should repent, or why?
What puts that in your head? Did I once say
That I repented?

Otti. No, I said the deed . . .

Seb. "The deed," and "the event"—just now it was
"Our passion's fruit"—the devil take such cant!
Say, once and always, Luca was a wittol,
I am his cut-throat, you are . . .

Otti. Here is the wine ;
I brought it when we left the house above,
And glasses too—wine of both sorts. Black? White then?

Seb. But am not I his cut-throat? What are you?

Otti. There trudges on his business from the Duomo
Benet the Capuchin, with his brown hood
And bare feet ; always in one place at church,
Close under the stone wall by the south entry.
I used to take him for a brown cold piece

Of the wall's self, as out of it he rose
To let me pass—at first, I say, I used :
Now, so has that dumb figure fastened on me,
I rather should account the plastered wall
A piece of him, so chilly does it strike.
This, Sebald?

Seb. No, the white wine—the white wine!

Well, Ottima, I promised no new year
Should rise on us the ancient shameful way;
Nor does it rise: pour on! To your black eyes!
Do you remember last damned New Year's day?

Otti. You brought those foreign prints. We looked at them
Over the wine and fruit. I had to scheme
To get him from the fire. Nothing but saying
His own set wants the proof-mark, roused him up
To hunt them out.

Seb. Faith, he is not alive
To fondle you before my face.

Otti. Do you
Fondle me then! Who means to take your life
For that, my Sebald?

Seb. Hark you, Ottima!
One thing to guard against. We'll not make much
One of the other—that is, not make more
Parade of warmth, childish officious coil,
Than yesterday: as if, sweet, I supposed
Proof upon proof were needed now, now first,
To show I love you—yes, still love you—love you

In spite of Luca and what 's come to him
—Sure sign we had him ever in our thoughts,
White sneering old reproachful face and all !
We 'll even quarrel, love, at times, as if
We still could lose each other, were not tied
By this : conceive you ?

Otti. Love !

Seb. Not tied so sure !

Because though I was wrought upon, have struck
His insolence back into him—am I
So surely yours ?—therefore forever yours ?

Otti. Love, to be wise, (one counsel pays another)
Should we have—months ago, when first we loved,
For instance that May morning we two stole
Under the green ascent of sycamores—
If we had come upon a thing like that
Suddenly . . .

Seb. " A thing "—there again—" a thing ! "

Otti. Then, Venus' body, had we come upon
My husband Luca Gaddi's murdered corpse
Within there, at his couch-foot, covered close—
Would you have pored upon it ? Why persist
In poring now upon it ? For 't is here
As much as there in the deserted house :
You cannot rid your eyes of it. For me,
Now he is dead I hate him worse : I hate . . .
Dare you stay here ? I would go back and hold
His two dead hands, and say, " I hate you worse,
" Luca, than . . ."

Seb. Off, off—take your hands off mine!
'T is the hot evening—off! oh, morning is it?
Otti. There 's one thing must be done; you know
what thing.
Come in and help to carry. We may sleep
Anywhere in the whole wide house to-night.
Seb. What would come, think you, if we let him lie
Just as he is? Let him lie there until
The angels take him! He is turned by this
Off from his face beside, as you will see.
Otti. This dusty pane might serve for looking-glass.
Three, four—four grey hairs! Is it so you said
A plait of hair should wave across my neck?
No—this way.
Seb. Ottima, I would give your neck,
Each splendid shoulder, both those breasts of yours,
That this were undone! Killing? Kill the world,
So Luca lives again!—ay, lives to sputter
His fulsome dotage on you—yes, and feign
Surprise that I return at eve to sup,
When all the morning I was loitering here—
Bid me dispatch my business and begone.
I would . . .
Otti. See!
Seb. No, I 'll finish! Do you think
I fear to speak the bare truth once for all?
All we have talked of is, at bottom, fine
To suffer; there 's a recompence in guilt;
One must be venturous and fortunate:

What is one young for, else? In age we 'll sigh
O'er the wild reckless wicked days flown over;
Still, we have lived: the vice was in its place.
But to have eaten Luca's bread, have worn
His clothes, have felt his money swell my purse—
Do lovers in romances sin that way?
Why, I was starving when I used to call
And teach you music, starving while you plucked me
These flowers to smell!

Otti. My poor lost friend!

Seb. He gave me
Life, nothing less: what if he did reproach
My perfidy, and threaten, and do more—
Had he no right? What was to wonder at?
He sat by us at table quietly:
Why must you lean across till our cheeks touched?
Could he do less than make pretence to strike?
'T is not the crime's sake—I 'd commit ten crimes
Greater, to have this crime wiped out, undone!
And you—O how feel you? Feel you for me?

Otti. Well then, I love you better now than ever,
And best (look at me while I speak to you)—
Best for the crime; nor do I grieve, in truth,
This mask, this simulated ignorance,
This affectation of simplicity,
Falls off our crime; this naked crime of ours
May not now be looked over: look it down then!
Great? let it be great; but the joys it brought,
Pay they or no its price? Come: they or it!

Speak not! The past, would you give up the past
Such as it is, pleasure and crime together?
Give up that noon I owned my love for you?
The garden's silence! even the single bee
Persisting in his toil, suddenly stopped:
And where he hid you only could surmise
By some campanula chalice set a-swing:
Who stammered—"Yes, I love you?"
Seb. And I drew
Back; put far back your face with both my hands
Lest you should grow too full of me—your face
So seemed athirst for my whole soul and body!
Otti. And when I ventured to receive you here,
Made you steal hither in the mornings—
Seb. When
I used to look up 'neath the shrub-house here,
Till the red fire on its glazed windows spread
To a yellow haze?
Otti. Ah—my sign was, the sun
Inflamed the sere side of yon chesnut-tree
Nipped by the first frost.
Seb. You would always laugh
At my wet boots: I had to stride thro' grass
Over my ancles.
Otti. Then our crowning night!
Seb. The July night?
Otti. The day of it too, Sebald!
When heaven's pillars seemed o'erbowed with heat,
Its black-blue canopy suffered descend

Close on us both, to weigh down each to each,
And smother up all life except our life.
So lay we till the storm came.

Seb. How it came!

Otti. Buried in woods we lay, you recollect;
Swift ran the searching tempest overhead;
And ever and anon some bright white shaft
Burned thro' the pine-tree roof, here burned and there,
As if God's messenger thro' the close wood screen
Plunged and replunged his weapon at a venture,
Feeling for guilty thee and me: then broke
The thunder like a whole sea overhead—

Seb. Yes!

Otti.—While I stretched myself upon you, hands
To hands, my mouth to your hot mouth, and shook
All my locks loose, and covered you with them—
You, Sebald, the same you!

Seb. Slower, Ottima!

Otti. And as we lay—

Seb. Less vehemently! Love me!
Forgive me! Take not words, mere words, to heart!
Your breath is worse than wine. Breathe slow, speak slow!
Do not lean on me!

Otti. Sebald, as we lay,
Rising and falling only with our pants,
Who said, "Let death come now! 'T is right to die!
"Right to be punished! Nought completes such bliss
"But woe!" Who said that?

Seb. How did we ever rise?
Was 't that we slept? Why did it end?
Otti. I felt you
Taper into a point the ruffled ends
Of my loose locks 'twixt both your humid lips.
My hair is fallen now: knot it again!
Seb. I kiss you now, dear Ottima, now and now!
This way? Will you forgive me—be once more
My great queen?
Otti. Bind it thrice about my brow;
Crown me your queen, your spirit's arbitress,
Magnificent in sin. Say that!
Seb. I crown you
My great white queen, my spirit's arbitress,
Magnificent . . .

[*From without is heard the voice of* PIPPA *singing*—

The year' s at the spring,
And day 's at the morn;
Morning 's at seven;
The hill-side 's dew-pearled;
The lark 's on the wing;
The snail 's on the thorn:
God 's in his heaven—
All 's right with the world!

[PIPPA *passes.*

Seb. God 's in his heaven! Do you hear that? Who spoke?
You, you spoke!
Otti. Oh—that little ragged girl!

She must have rested on the step : we give them
But this one holiday the whole year round.
Did you ever see our silk-mills—their inside ?
There are ten silk-mills now belong to you.
She stoops to pick my double heartsease . . . Sh !
She does not hear : call you out louder !

Seb. Leave me !

Go, get your clothes on—dress those shoulders !

Otti. Sebald ?

Seb. Wipe off that paint ! I hate you.

Otti. Miserable !

Seb. My God, and she is emptied of it now !
Outright now !—how miraculously gone
All of the grace—had she not strange grace once ?
Why, the blank cheek hangs listless as it likes,
No purpose holds the features up together,
Only the cloven brow and puckered chin
Stay in their places : and the very hair,
That seemed to have a sort of life in it,
Drops, a dead web !

Otti. Speak to me—not of me !

Seb. —That round great full-orbed face, where not an angle
Broke the delicious indolence—all broken !

Otti. To me—not of me ! Ungrateful, perjured cheat !
A coward too : but ingrate 's worse than all !
Beggar—my slave—a fawning, cringing lie !
Leave me ! Betray me ! I can see your drift !
A lie that walks and eats and drinks !

Seb. My God !
Those morbid olive faultless shoulder-blades—
I should have known there was no blood beneath !
Otti. You hate me then ? You hate me then ?
Seb. To think
She would succeed in her absurd attempt,
And fascinate by sinning, and show herself
Superior—guilt from its excess superior
To innocence ! That little peasant's voice
Has righted all again. Though I be lost,
I know which is the better, never fear,
Of vice or virtue, purity or lust,
Nature or trick ! I see what I have done,
Entirely now ! Oh I am proud to feel
Such torments—let the world take credit thence—
I, having done my deed, pay too its price !
I hate, hate—curse you ! God's in his heaven !
Otti. —Me !
Me ! no, no, Sebald, not yourself—kill me !
Mine is the whole crime. Do but kill me—then
Yourself—then—presently—first hear me speak !
I always meant to kill myself—wait, you !
Lean on my breast—not as a breast ; don't love me
The more because you lean on me, my own
Heart's Sebald ! There, there, both deaths presently !
Seb. My brain is drowned now—quite drowned : all I feel
Is . . . is, at swift-recurring intervals,
A hurry-down within me, as of waters

Loosened to smother up some ghastly pit:
They—they go—whirls from a black fiery sea!
Otti. Not me—to him, O God, be merciful!

Talk by the way, while PIPPA *is passing from the Hill-side to Orcana. Foreign Students of Painting and Sculpture, from Venice, assembled opposite the house of* JULES, *a young French Statuary, at Possagno.*

1*st Student.* Attention! My own post is beneath this window, but the pomegranate clump yonder will hide three or four of you with a little squeezing, and Schramm and his pipe must lie flat in the balcony. Four, five—who 's a defaulter? We want everybody, for Jules must not be suffered to hurt his bride when the jest 's found out.

2*nd Stud.* All here! Only our poet 's away—never having much meant to be present, moonstrike him! The airs of that fellow, that Giovacchino! He was in violent love with himself, and had a fair prospect of thriving in his suit, so unmolested was it,—when suddenly a woman falls in love with him, too; and out of pure jealousy he takes himself off to Trieste, immortal poem and all: whereto is this prophetical epitaph appended already, as Bluphocks assures me,—"*Here a mammoth-poem lies, Fouled to death by butterflies.*" His own fault, the simpleton! Instead of cramp couplets, each like a knife in your entrails, he should write, says Bluphocks, both classically and intelligibly.

—Æsculapius, an Epic. Catalogue of the drugs: Hebe's plaister—One strip Cools your lip. Phœbus' emulsion—One bottle Clears your throttle. Mercury's bolus—One box Cures . . .

3rd Stud. Subside, my fine fellow! If the marriage was over by ten o'clock, Jules will certainly be here in a minute with his bride.

2nd Stud. Good!—only, so should the poet's muse have been universally acceptable, says Bluphocks, *et canibus nostris* . . . and Delia not better known to our literary dogs than the boy Giovacchino!

1st Stud. To the point, now. Where's Gottlieb, the new-comer? Oh,—listen, Gottlieb, to what has called down this piece of friendly vengeance on Jules, of which we now assemble to witness the winding-up. We are all agreed, all in a tale, observe, when Jules shall burst out on us in a fury by and by: I am spokesman—the verses that are to undeceive Jules bear my name of Lutwyche—but each professes himself alike insulted by this strutting stone-squarer, who came alone from Paris to Munich, and thence with a crowd of us to Venice and Possagno here, but proceeds in a day or two alone again—oh, alone indubitably!—to Rome and Florence. He, forsooth, take up his portion with these dissolute, brutalized, heartless bunglers!—so he was heard to call us all: now, is Schramm brutalized, I should like to know? Am I heartless?

Gott. Why, somewhat heartless; for, suppose Jules a coxcomb as much as you choose, still, for this mere

coxcombry, you will have brushed off—what do folks style it?—the bloom of his life. Is it too late to alter? These love-letters now, you call his—I can't laugh at them.

4th Stud. Because you never read the sham letters of our inditing which drew forth these.

Gott. His discovery of the truth will be frightful.

4th Stud. That's the joke. But you should have joined us at the beginning: there's no doubt he loves the girl—loves a model he might hire by the hour!

Gott. See here! "He has been accustomed," he writes, "to have Canova's women about him, in stone, "and the world's women beside him, in flesh; these being "as much below, as those, above his soul's aspiration: "but now he is to have the reality." There you laugh again! I say, you wipe off the very dew of his youth.

1st Stud. Schramm! (Take the pipe out of his mouth, somebody!) Will Jules lose the bloom of his youth?

Schramm. Nothing worth keeping is ever lost in this world: look at a blossom—it drops presently, having done its service and lasted its time; but fruits succeed, and where would be the blossom's place could it continue? As well affirm that your eye is no longer in your body, because its earliest favourite, whatever it may have first loved to look on, is dead and done with—as that any affection is lost to the soul when its first object, whatever happened first to satisfy it, is superseded in due course. Keep but ever looking, whether with the body's eye or the mind's, and you will soon find some-

thing to look on! Has a man done wondering at women?—there follow men, dead and alive, to wonder at. Has he done wondering at men?—there's God to wonder at: and the faculty of wonder may be, at the same time, old and tired enough with respect to its first object, and yet young and fresh sufficiently, so far as concerns its novel one. Thus . . .

1*st Stud.* Put Schramm's pipe into his mouth again! There, you see! Well, this Jules . . . a wretched fribble —oh, I watched his disportings at Possagno, the other day! Canova's gallery—you know: there he marches first resolvedly past great works by the dozen without vouchsafing an eye: all at once he stops full at the *Psiche-fanciulla*—cannot pass that old acquaintance without a nod of encouragement—"In your new place, beauty? Then behave yourself as well here as at Munich —I see you!" Next he posts himself deliberately before the unfinished *Pietà* for half an hour without moving, till up he starts of a sudden, and thrusts his very nose into—I say, into—the group; by which gesture you are informed that precisely the sole point he had not fully mastered in Canova's practice was a certain method of using the drill in the articulation of the knee-joint—and that, likewise, has he mastered at length! Good bye therefore, to poor Canova—whose gallery no longer needs detain his successor Jules, the predestinated novel thinker in marble!

5*th Stud.* Tell him about the women: go on to the women!

1*st Stud.* Why, on that matter he could never be supercilious enough. How should we be other (he said) than the poor devils you see, with those debasing habits we cherish? He was not to wallow in that mire, at least: he would wait, and love only at the proper time, and meanwhile put up with the *Psiche-fanciulla.* Now, I happened to hear of a young Greek—real Greek girl at Malamocco; a true Islander, do you see, with Alciphron's "hair like sea-moss"—Schramm knows!—white and quiet as an apparition, and fourteen years old at farthest, —a daughter of Natalia, so she swears—that hag Natalia, who helps us to models at three *lire* an hour. We selected this girl for the heroine of our jest. So first, Jules received a scented letter—somebody had seen his Tydeus at the academy, and my picture was nothing to it: a profound admirer bade him persevere—would make herself known to him ere long. (Paolina, my little friend of the *Fenice*, transcribes divinely.) And in due time, the mysterious correspondent gave certain hints of her peculiar charms—the pale cheeks, the black hair—whatever, in short, had struck us in our Malamocco model: we retained her name, too—Phene, which is, by interpretation, sea-eagle. Now, think of Jules finding himself distinguished from the herd of us by such a creature! In his very first answer he proposed marrying his monitress: and fancy us over these letters, two, three times a day, to receive and despatch! I concocted the main of it: relations were in the way—secrecy must be observed—in fine, would he wed her on trust, and only

speak to her when they were indissolubly united? St—st—Here they come!

6th Stud. Both of them! Heaven's love, speak softly, speak within yourselves!

5th Stud. Look at the bridegroom! Half his hair in storm and half in calm,—patted down over the left temple,—like a frothy cup one blows on to cool it: and the same old blouse that he murders the marble in.

2nd Stud. Not a rich vest like yours, Hannibal Scratchy!—rich, that your face may the better set it off.

6th Stud. And the bride! Yes, sure enough, our Phene! Should you have known her in her clothes? How magnificently pale!

Gott. She does not also take it for earnest, I hope?

1st Stud. Oh, Natalia's concern, that is! We settle with Natalia.

6th Stud. She does not speak—has evidently let out no word. The only thing is, will she equally remember the rest of her lesson, and repeat correctly all those verses which are to break the secret to Jules?

Gott. How he gazes on her! Pity—pity!

1st Stud. They go in: now, silence! You three,—not nearer the window, mind, than that pomegranate: just where the little girl, who a few minutes ago passed us singing, is seated!

II.—NOON. *Over Orcana. The house of* JULES, *who crosses its threshold with* PHENE : *she is silent, on which* JULES *begins—*

Do not die, Phene! I am yours now, you
Are mine now; let fate reach me how she likes,
If you 'll not die: so, never die! Sit here—
My work-room's single seat. I over-lean
This length of hair and lustrous front; they turn
Like an entire flower upward: eyes, lips, last
Your chin—no, last your throat turns: 't is their scent
Pulls down my face upon you. Nay, look ever
This one way till I change, grow you—I could
Change into you, beloved!

You by me,
And I by you; this is your hand in mine,
And side by side we sit: all 's true. Thank God!
I have spoken: speak, you!

O my life to come!
My Tydeus must be carved that 's there in clay;
Yet how be carved, with you about the room?
Where must I place you? When I think that once
This room-full of rough block-work seemed my heaven
Without you! Shall I ever work again,
Get fairly into my old ways again,
Bid each conception stand while, trait by trait,
My hand transfers its lineaments to stone?
Will my mere fancies live near you, their truth—
The live truth, passing and repassing me,
Sitting beside me?

Now speak!

Only first,
See, all your letters! Was't not well contrived?
Their hiding-place is Psyche's robe; she keeps
Your letters next her skin: which drops out foremost?
Ah,—this that swam down like a first moonbeam
Into my world!
Again those eyes complete
Their melancholy survey, sweet and slow,
Of all my room holds; to return and rest
On me, with pity, yet some wonder too:
As if God bade some spirit plague a world,
And this were the one moment of surprise
And sorrow while she took her station, pausing
O'er what she sees, finds good, and must destroy!
What gaze you at? Those? Books, I told you of;
Let your first word to me rejoice them, too:
This minion, a Coluthus, writ in red
Bistre and azure by Bessarion's scribe—
Read this line . . no, shame—Homer's be the Greek
First breathed me from the lips of my Greek girl!
This Odyssey in coarse black vivid type
With faded yellow blossoms 'twixt page and page,
To mark great places with due gratitude;
"*He said, and on Antinous directed*
"*A bitter shaft*" . . . a flower blots out the rest!
Again upon your search? My statues, then!
—Ah, do not mind that—better that will look
When cast in bronze—an Almaign Kaiser, that,
Swart-green and gold, with truncheon based on hip.

This, rather, turn to ! What, unrecognised ?
I thought you would have seen, that here you sit
As I imagined you,—Hippolyta,
Naked upon her bright Numidian horse.
Recall you this then ? "Carve in bold relief"—
So you commanded—"carve, against I come,
"A Greek, in Athens, as our fashion was,
"Feasting, bay-filleted and thunder-free,
"Who rises 'neath the lifted myrtle-branch.
"'Praise those who slew Hipparchus !' cry the guests,
"'While o'er thy head the singer's myrtle waves
"'As erst above our champion : stand up, all !'"
See, I have laboured to express your thought.
Quite round, a cluster of mere hands and arms,
(Thrust in all senses, all ways, from all sides,
Only consenting at the branch's end
They strain toward) serves for frame to a sole face,
The Praiser's, in the centre : who with eyes
Sightless, so bend they back to light inside
His brain where visionary forms throng up,
Sings, minding not that palpitating arch
Of hands and arms, nor the quick drip of wine
From the drenched leaves o'erhead, nor crowns cast off,
Violet and parsley crowns to trample on—
Sings, pausing as the patron-ghosts approve,
Devoutly their unconquerable hymn.
But you must say a "well" to that—say "well !"
Because you gaze—am I fantastic, sweet ?
Gaze like my very life's-stuff, marble—marbly

Even to the silence! Why, before I found
The real flesh Phene, I inured myself
To see, throughout all nature, varied stuff
For better nature's birth by means of art:
With me, each substance tended to one form
Of beauty—to the human archetype.
On every side occurred suggestive germs
Of that—the tree, the flower—or take the fruit,—
Some rosy shape, continuing the peach,
Curved beewise o'er its bough; as rosy limbs,
Depending, nestled in the leaves; and just
From a cleft rose-peach the whole Dryad sprang.
But of the stuffs one can be master of,
How I divined their capabilities!
From the soft-rinded smoothening facile chalk
That yields your outline to the air's embrace,
Half-softened by a halo's pearly gloom;
Down to the crisp imperious steel, so sure
To cut its one confided thought clean out
Of all the world. But marble!—'neath my tools
More pliable than jelly—as it were
Some clear primordial creature dug from depths
In the earth's heart, where itself breeds itself,
And whence all baser substance may be worked;
Refine it off to air, you may,—condense it
Down to the diamond;—is not metal there,
When o'er the sudden speck my chisel trips?
—Not flesh, as flake off flake I scale, approach,
Lay bare those bluish veins of blood asleep?

Lurks flame in no strange windings where, surprised
By the swift implement sent home at once,
Flushes and glowings radiate and hover
About its track?

Phene? what—why is this?
That whitening cheek, those still-dilating eyes!
Ah, you will die—I knew that you would die!

PHENE *begins, on his having long remained silent.*

Now the end 's coming; to be sure, it must
Have ended sometime! Tush, why need I speak
Their foolish speech? I cannot bring to mind
One half of it, beside; and do not care
For old Natalia now, nor any of them.
Oh, you—what are you?—if I do not try
To say the words Natalia made me learn,
To please your friends,—it is to keep myself
Where your voice lifted me, by letting that
Proceed: but can it? Even you, perhaps,
Cannot take up, now you have once let fall,
The music's life, and me along with that—
No, or you would! We 'll stay, then, as we are:
Above the world.

You creature with the eyes!
If I could look for ever up to them,
As now you let me,—I believe, all sin,
All memory of wrong done, suffering borne,
Would drop down, low and lower, to the earth
Whence all that 's low comes, and there touch and stay
—Never to overtake the rest of me,

All that, unspotted, reaches up to you,
Drawn by those eyes! What rises is myself,
Not me the shame and suffering; but they sink,
Are left, I rise above them. Keep me so,
Above the world!

But you sink, for your eyes
Are altering—altered! Stay—"I love you, love" . . .
I could prevent it if I understood:
More of your words to me: was 't in the tone
Or the words, your power?

Or stay—I will repeat
Their speech, if that contents you! Only change
No more, and I shall find it presently
Far back here, in the brain yourself filled up.
Natalia threatened me that harm should follow
Unless I spoke their lesson to the end,
But harm to me, I thought she meant, not you.
Your friends,—Natalia said they were your friends
And meant you well,—because, I doubted it,
Observing (what was very strange to see)
On every face, so different in all else,
The same smile girls like me are used to bear,
But never men, men cannot stoop so low;
Yet your friends, speaking of you, used that smile,
That hateful smirk of boundless self-conceit
Which seems to take possession of the world
And make of God a tame confederate,
Purveyor to their appetites . . you know!
But still Natalia said they were your friends,

And they assented though they smiled the more,
And all came round me,—that thin Englishman
With light lank hair seemed leader of the rest;
He held a paper—"What we want," said he,
Ending some explanation to his friends—
"Is something slow, involved and mystical,
"To hold Jules long in doubt, yet take his taste
"And lure him on until, at innermost
"Where he seeks sweetness' soul, he may find—this!
"—As in the apple's core, the noisome fly:
"For insects on the rind are seen at once,
"And brushed aside as soon, but this is found
"Only when on the lips or loathing tongue."
And so he read what I have got by heart:
I 'll speak it,—"Do not die, love! I am yours" . . .
No—is not that, or like that, part of words
Yourself began by speaking? Strange to lose
What cost such pains to learn! Is this more right?

I am a painter who cannot paint;
In my life, a devil rather than saint,
In my brain, as poor a creature too:
No end to all I cannot do!
Yet do one thing at least I can—
Love a man or hate a man
Supremely: thus my lore began.
Through the Valley of Love I went,
In the lovingest spot to abide,
And just on the verge where I pitched my tent,
I found Hate dwelling beside.

(Let the Bridegroom ask what the painter meant,
Of his Bride, of the peerless Bride!)
And further, I traversed Hate's grove,
In the hatefullest nook to dwell;
But lo, where I flung myself prone, couched Love
Where the shadow threefold fell.
(The meaning—those black bride's-eyes above,
Not a painter's lip should tell!)

"And here," said he, "Jules probably will ask,
"'You have black eyes, Love,—you are, sure enough,
"'My peerless bride,—then do you tell indeed
"'What needs some explanation! What means this?'"
—And I am to go on, without a word—
So, I grew wise in Love and Hate,
From simple that I was of late.
For once, when I loved, I would enlace
Breast, eyelids, hands, feet, form and face
Of her I loved, in one embrace—
As if by mere love I could love immensely!
And when I hated, I would plunge
My sword, and wipe with the first lunge
My foe's whole life out like a sponge—
As if by mere hate I could hate intensely!
But now I am wiser, know better the fashion
How passion seeks aid from its opposite passion:
And if I see cause to love more, hate more
Than ever man loved, ever hated before—
And seek in the Valley of Love,

The nest, or the nook in Hate's Grove,
Where my soul may surely reach
The essence, nought less, of each,
The Hate of all Hates, the Love
Of all Loves, in the Valley or Grove,—
I find them the very warders
Each of the other's borders.
When I love most, Love is disguised
In Hate; and when Hate is surprised
In Love, then I hate most: ask
How Love smiles through Hate's iron casque,
Hate grins through Love's rose-braided mask,—
And how, having hated thee,
I sought long and painfully
To reach thy heart, nor prick
The skin but pierce to the quick—
Ask this, my Jules, and be answered straight
By thy bride—how the painter Lutwyche can hate!

JULES *interposes.*

Lutwyche! Who else? But all of them, no doubt,
Hated me: they at Venice—presently
Their turn, however! You I shall not meet:
If I dreamed, saying this would wake me.

Keep
What's here, the gold—we cannot meet again,
Consider! and the money was but meant
For two years' travel, which is over now,
All chance or hope or care or need of it.

This—and what comes from selling these, my casts
And books and medals, except . . . let them go
Together, so the produce keeps you safe
Out of Natalia's clutches!—If by chance
(For all 's chance here) I should survive the gang
At Venice, root out all fifteen of them,
We might meet somewhere, since the world is wide.

[*From without is heard the voice of* PIPPA, *singing*—

Give her but a least excuse to love me!
When—where—
How—can this arm establish her above me,
If fortune fixed her as my lady there,
There already, to eternally reprove me?
("Hist!"—said Kate the Queen;
But "Oh"—cried the maiden, binding her tresses,
"'T is only a page that carols unseen,
"Crumbling your hounds their messes!")

Is she wronged?—To the rescue of her honour,
My heart!
Is she poor?—What costs it to be styled a donor?
Merely an earth to cleave, a sea to part.
But that fortune should have thrust all this upon her!
("Nay, list!"—bade Kate the Queen;
And still cried the maiden, binding her tresses,
"'T is only a page that carols unseen,
"Fitting your hawks their jesses!")

[PIPPA *passes.*

JULES *resumes.*

What name was that the little girl sang forth?
Kate? The Cornaro, doubtless, who renounced
The crown of Cyprus to be lady here
At Asolo, where still her memory stays,
And peasants sing how once a certain page
Pined for the grace of her so far above
His power of doing good to, "Kate the Queen—
"She never could be wronged, be poor," he sighed,
"Need him to help her!"
Yes, a bitter thing
To see our lady above all need of us;
Yet so we look ere we will love; not I,
But the world looks so. If whoever loves
Must be, in some sort, god or worshipper,
The blessing or the blessed one, queen or page,
Why should we always choose the page's part?
Here is a woman with utter need of me,—
I find myself queen here, it seems!
How strange!
Look at the woman here with the new soul,
Like my own Psyche,—fresh upon her lips
Alit, the visionary butterfly,
Waiting my word to enter and make bright,
Or flutter off and leave all blank as first.
This body had no soul before, but slept
Or stirred, was beauteous or ungainly, free
From taint or foul with stain, as outward things
Fastened their image on its passiveness:

Now, it will wake, feel, live—or die again!
Shall to produce form out of unshaped stuff
Be Art—and further, to evoke a soul
From form be nothing? This new soul is mine!

Now, to kill Lutwyche, what would that do?—save
A wretched dauber, men will hoot to death
Without me, from their hooting. Oh, to hear
God's voice plain as I heard it first, before
They broke in with their laughter! I heard them
Henceforth, not God.

To Ancona—Greece—some isle!
I wanted silence only: there is clay
Everywhere. One may do whate'er one likes
In Art: the only thing is, to make sure
That one does like it—which takes pains to know.
Scatter all this, my Phene—this mad dream!
Who, what is Lutwyche, what Natalia's friends,
What the whole world except our love—my own,
Own Phene? But I told you, did I not,
Ere night we travel for your land—some isle
With the sea's silence on it? Stand aside—
I do but break these paltry models up
To begin Art afresh. Meet Lutwyche, I—
And save him from my statue meeting him?
Some unsuspected isle in the far seas!
Like a god going through his world, there stands
One mountain for a moment in the dusk,
Whole brotherhoods of cedars on its brow:

And you are ever by me while I gaze
—Are in my arms as now—as now—as now!
Some unsuspected isle in the far seas!
Some unsuspected isle in far-off seas!

Talk by the way, while PIPPA *is passing from Orcana to the Turret. Two or three of the Austrian Police loitering with* BLUPHOCKS, *an English vagabond, just in view of the Turret.*

*Bluphocks.** So, that is your Pippa, the little girl who passed us singing? Well, your Bishop's Intendant's money shall be honestly earned:—now, don't make me that sour face because I bring the Bishop's name into the business; we know he can have nothing to do with such horrors: we know that he is a saint and all that a bishop should be, who is a great man beside. *Oh were but every worm a maggot, Every fly a grig, Every bough a Christmas faggot, Every tune a jig!* In fact, I have abjured all religions; but the last I inclined to, was the Armenian: for I have travelled, do you see, and at Koenigsberg, Prussia Improper (so styled because there's a sort of bleak hungry sun there), you might remark over a venerable house-porch, a certain Chaldee inscription; and brief as it is, a mere glance at it used absolutely to change the mood of every bearded passenger. In they turned, one and all; the young and lightsome,

* "He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust."

with no irreverent pause, the aged and decrepit, with a sensible alacrity: 't was the Grand Rabbi's abode, in short. Struck with curiosity, I lost no time in learning Syriac—(these are vowels, you dogs,—follow my stick's end in the mud—*Celarent*, *Darii*, *Ferio !*) and one morning presented myself, spelling-book in hand, a, b, c,—I picked it out letter by letter, and what was the purport of this miraculous posy? Some cherished legend of the past, you'll say—"*How Moses hocus-pocussed Egypt's land with fly and locust*,"—or, "*How to Jonah sounded harshish, Get thee up and go to Tarshish*," —or, "*How the angel meeting Balaam, Straight his ass returned a salaam.*" In no wise! "*Shackabrach—Boach—somebody or other —Isaach, Re-cei-ver, Pur-cha-ser and Ex-chan-ger of— Stolen Goods!*" So, talk to me of the religion of a bishop! I have renounced all bishops save Bishop Beveridge—mean to live so—and die—*As some Greek dog-sage, dead and merry, Hellward bound in Charon's wherry, With food for both worlds, under and upper, Lupine-seed and Hecate's supper, And never an obolus . . .* (Though thanks to you, or this Intendant through you, or this Bishop through his Intendant—I possess a burning pocket-full of *zwanzigers*) . . *To pay the Stygian Ferry!*

1*st Pol.* There is the girl, then; go and deserve them the moment you have pointed out to us Signor Luigi and his mother. (*To the rest*) I have been noticing a house yonder, this long while: not a shutter unclosed since morning!

2nd Pol. Old Luca Gaddi's, that owns the silk-mills here: he dozes by the hour, wakes up, sighs deeply, says he should like to be Prince Metternich, and then dozes again, after having bidden young Sebald, the foreigner, set his wife to playing draughts. Never molest such a household, they mean well.

Blup. Only, cannot you tell me something of this little Pippa, I must have to do with? One could make something of that name. Pippa—that is, short for Felippa —rhyming to *Panurge consults Hertrippa—Believest thou, King Agrippa!* Something might be done with that name.

2nd Pol. Put into rhyme that your head and a ripe musk-melon would not be dear at half a *zwanziger*! Leave this fooling, and look out: the afternoon's over or nearly so.

3rd Pol. Where in this passport of Signor Luigi does our Principal instruct you to watch him so narrowly? There? What's there beside a simple signature? (That English fool's busy watching.)

2nd Pol. Flourish all round—"Put all possible obstacles in his way;" oblong dot at the end—"Detain him till further advices reach you;" scratch at bottom—"Send him back on pretence of some informality in the above;" ink-spirt on right-hand side, (which is the case here)—"Arrest him at once." Why and wherefore, I don't concern myself, but my instructions amount to this: if Signor Luigi leaves home to-night for Vienna —well and good, the passport deposed with us for

our *visa* is really for his own use, they have misinformed the Office, and he means well; but let him stay over to-night—there has been the pretence we suspect, the accounts of his corresponding and holding intelligence with the Carbonari are correct, we arrest him at once, to-morrow comes Venice, and presently Spielberg. Blup-hocks makes the signal, sure enough! That is he, entering the turret with his mother, no doubt.

III.—EVENING. *Inside the Turret on the Hill above Asolo.*
LUIGI *and his Mother entering.*

Mother. If there blew wind, you'd hear a long sigh, easing
The utmost heaviness of music's heart.

Luigi. Here in the archway?

Mother. Oh no, no—in farther,
Where the echo is made, on the ridge.

Luigi. Here surely, then.
How plain the tap of my heel as I leaped up!
Hark—"Lucius Junius!" The very ghost of a voice
Whose body is caught and kept by . . . what are those?
Mere withered wallflowers, waving overhead?
They seem an elvish group with thin bleached hair
That lean out of their topmost fortress—look
And listen, mountain men, to what we say,
Hand under chin of each grave earthy face:
Up and show faces all of you!—"All of you!"

That 's the king dwarf with the scarlet comb; old Franz,
Come down and meet your fate! Hark—"Meet your
fate!"

Mother. Let him not meet it, my Luigi—do not
Go to his City! Putting crime aside,
Half of these ills of Italy are feigned:
Your Pellicos and writers for effect,
Write for effect.

Luigi. Hush! Say A. writes, and B.

Mother. These A.s and B.s write for effect, I say.
Then, evil is in its nature loud, while good
Is silent; you hear each petty injury,
None of his virtues; he is old beside,
Quiet and kind, and densely stupid. Why
Do A. and B. not kill him themselves?

Luigi. They teach
Others to kill him—me—and, if I fail,
Others to succeed; now, if A. tried and failed,
I could not teach that: mine 's the lesser task.
Mother, they visit night by night . . .

Mother. —You, Luigi?
Ah, will you let me tell you what you are?

Luigi. Why not? Oh, the one thing you fear to hint,
You may assure yourself I say and say
Ever to myself! At times—nay, even as now
We sit—I think my mind is touched, suspect
All is not sound: but is not knowing that,
What constitutes one sane or otherwise?
I know I am thus—so, all is right again.

I laugh at myself as through the town I walk,
And see men merry as if no Italy
Were suffering; then I ponder—"I am rich,
"Young, healthy; why should this fact trouble me,
"More than it troubles these?" But it does trouble.
No, trouble 's a bad word: for as I walk
There 's springing and melody and giddiness,
And old quaint turns and passages of my youth,
Dreams long forgotten, little in themselves,
Return to me—whatever may amuse me;
And earth seems in a truce with me, and heaven
Accords with me, all things suspend their strife,
The very cicala laughs "There goes he, and there!
"Feast him, the time is short; he is on his way
"For the world's sake: feast him this once, our friend!"
And in return for all this, I can trip
Cheerfully up the scaffold-steps. I go
This evening, mother!

Mother. But mistrust yourself—
Mistrust the judgment you pronounce on him!

Luigi. Oh, there I feel—am sure that I am right!

Mother. Mistrust your judgment then, of the mere means
To this wild enterprise: say, you are right,—
How should one in your state e'er bring to pass
What would require a cool head, a cold heart
And a calm hand? You never will escape.

Luigi. Escape? To even wish that, would spoil all.
The dying is best part of it. Too much

Have I enjoyed these fifteen years of mine,
To leave myself excuse for longer life :
Was not life pressed down, running o'er with joy,
That I might finish with it ere my fellows
Who, sparelier feasted, make a longer stay?
I was put at the board-head, helped to all
At first ; I rise up happy and content.
God must be glad one loves his world so much.
I can give news of earth to all the dead
Who ask me :—last year's sunsets, and great stars
That had a right to come first and see ebb
The crimson wave that drifts the sun away—
Those crescent moons with notched and burning rims
That strengthened into sharp fire, and there stood,
Impatient of the azure—and that day
In March, a double rainbow stopped the storm—
May 's warm slow yellow moonlit summer nights—
Gone are they, but I have them in my soul !

Mother. (He will not go !)

Luigi. You smile at me? 'T is true,—
Voluptuousness, grotesqueness, ghastliness,
Environ my devotedness as quaintly
As round about some antique altar wreathe
The rose festoons, goats' horns, and oxen's skulls.

Mother. See now : you reach the city, you must cross
His threshold—how?

Luigi. Oh, that 's if we conspired !
Then would come pains in plenty, as you guess—
But guess not how the qualities most fit

For such an office, qualities I have,
Would little stead me, otherwise employed,
Yet prove of rarest merit only here.
Every one knows for what his excellence
Will serve, but no one ever will consider
For what his worst defect might serve; and yet
Have you not seen me range our coppice yonder
In search of a distorted ash?—I find
The wry spoilt branch a natural perfect bow.
Fancy the thrice-sage, thrice-precautioned man
Arriving at the palace on my errand!
No, no! I have a handsome dress packed up—
White satin here, to set off my black hair;
In I shall march—for you may watch your life out
Behind thick walls, make friends there to betray you;
More than one man spoils everything. March straight—
Only, no clumsy knife to fumble for.
Take the great gate, and walk (not saunter) on
Thro' guards and guards——I have rehearsed it all
Inside the turret here a hundred times.
Don't ask the way of whom you meet, observe!
But where they cluster thickliest is the door
Of doors; they 'll let you pass—they 'll never blab
Each to the other, he knows not the favourite,
Whence he is bound and what 's his business now.
Walk in—straight up to him; you have no knife:
Be prompt, how should he scream? Then, out with you!
Italy, Italy, my Italy!
You 're free, you 're free! Oh mother, I could dream

They got about me—Andrea from his exile,
Pier from his dungeon, Gualtier from his grave !

Mother. Well, you shall go. Yet seems this patriotism
The easiest virtue for a selfish man
To acquire : he loves himself—and next, the world—
If he must love beyond,—but nought between :
As a short-sighted man sees nought midway
His body and the sun above. But you
Are my adored Luigi, ever obedient
To my least wish, and running o'er with love :
I could not call you cruel or unkind.
Once more, your ground for killing him !—then go !

Luigi. Now do you try me, or make sport of me ?
How first the Austrians got these provinces . . .
(If that is all, I 'll satisfy you soon)
—Never by conquest but by cunning, for
That treaty whereby . . .

Mother. Well ?

Luigi. (Sure he 's arrived,
The tell-tale cuckoo : spring 's his confidant,
And he lets out her April purposes !)
Or . . better go at once to modern time.
He has . . they have . . in fact, I understand
But can't restate the matter ; that 's my boast :
Others could reason it out to you, and prove
Things they have made me feel.

Mother. Why go to-night ?
Morn 's for adventure. Jupiter is now
A morning star. I cannot hear you, Luigi !

Luigi. "I am the bright and morning-star," saith
God—
And, "to such an one I give the morning-star."
The gift of the morning-star! Have I God's gift
Of the morning-star?
Mother. Chiara will love to see
That Jupiter an evening-star next June.
Luigi. True, mother. Well for those who live through
June!
Great noontides, thunder-storms, all glaring pomps
That triumph at the heels of June the god
Leading his revel through our leafy world.
Yes, Chiara will be here.
Mother. In June: remember,
Yourself appointed that month for her coming.
Luigi. Was that low noise the echo?
Mother. The night-wind.
She must be grown—with her blue eyes upturned
As if life were one long and sweet surprise:
In June she comes.
Luigi. We were to see together
The Titian at Treviso. There, again!

[*From without is heard the voice of* PIPPA, *singing*—

A king lived long ago,
In the morning of the world,
When earth was nigher heaven than now:
And the king's locks curled,
Disparting o'er a forehead full
As the milk-white space 'twixt horn and horn

Of some sacrificial bull—
Only calm as a babe new-born:
For he was got to a sleepy mood,
So safe from all decrepitude,
Age with its bane so sure gone by,
(The gods so loved him while he dreamed)
That, having lived thus long, there seemed
No need the king should ever die.

Luigi. No need that sort of king should ever die!
Among the rocks his city was:
Before his palace, in the sun,
He sat to see his people pass,
And judge them every one
From its threshold of smooth stone.
They haled him many a valley-thief
Caught in the sheep-pens, robber-chief
Swarthy and shameless, beggar-cheat,
Spy-prowler, or rough pirate found
On the sea-sand left aground;
And sometimes clung about his feet,
With bleeding lip and burning cheek,
A woman, bitterest wrong to speak
Of one with sullen, thickset brows:
And sometimes from the prison-house
The angry priests a pale wretch brought,
Who through some chink had pushed and pressed
On knees and elbows, belly and breast,
Worm-like into the temple,—caught
He was by the very god,

Who ever in the darkness strode
Backward and forward, keeping watch
O'er his brazen bowls, such rogues to catch!
These, all and every one,
The king judged, sitting in the sun.

Luigi. That king should still judge sitting in the sun!
His councillors, on left and right,
Looked anxious up,—but no surprise
Disturbed the king's old smiling eyes
Where the very blue had turned to white.
'T is said, a Python scared one day
The breathless city, till he came,
With forky tongue and eyes on flame,
Where the old king sat to judge alway;
But when he saw the sweepy hair
Girt with a crown of berries rare
Which the god will hardly give to wear
To the maiden who singeth, dancing bare
In the altar-smoke by the pine-torch lights,
At his wondrous forest rites,—
Seeing this, he did not dare
Approach that threshold in the sun,
Assault the old king smiling there.
Such grace had kings when the world begun!

[PIPPA *passes.*

Luigi. And such grace have they, now that the world ends!
The Python at the city, on the throne,
And brave men, God would crown for slaying him,

Lurk in bye-corners lest they fall his prey.
Are crowns yet to be won in this late time,
Which weakness makes me hesitate to reach?
'T is God's voice calls: how could I stay? Farewell!

Talk by the way, while PIPPA *is passing from the Turret to the Bishop's Brother's House, close to the Duomo S. Maria. Poor* Girls *sitting on the steps.*

1st Girl. There goes a swallow to Venice—the stout
seafarer!
Seeing those birds fly, makes one wish for wings.
Let us all wish; you, wish first!
2nd Girl. I? This sunset
To finish.
3rd Girl. That old—somebody I know,
Greyer and older than my grandfather,
To give me the same treat he gave last week—
Feeding me on his knee with fig-peckers,
Lampreys and red Breganze-wine, and mumbling
The while some folly about how well I fare,
Let sit and eat my supper quietly:
Since had he not himself been late this morning
Detained at—never mind where,—had he not . .
"Eh, baggage, had I not!"—
2nd Girl. How she can lie!
3rd Girl. Look there—by the nails!
2nd Girl. What makes your fingers red?

3rd Girl. Dipping them into wine to write bad words
with
On the bright table: how he laughed!
1st Girl. My turn.
Spring 's come and summer 's coming. I would wear
A long loose gown, down to the feet and hands,
With plaits here, close about the throat, all day;
And all night lie, the cool long nights, in bed;
And have new milk to drink, apples to eat,
Deuzans and junetings, leather-coats . . ah, I should say,
This is away in the fields—miles!
3rd Girl. Say at once
You 'd be at home: she 'd always be at home!
Now comes the story of the farm among
The cherry orchards, and how April snowed
White blossoms on her as she ran. Why, fool,
They 've rubbed the chalk-mark out, how tall you were,
Twisted your starling's neck, broken his cage,
Made a dunghill of your garden!
1st Girl. They, destroy
My garden since I left them? well—perhaps!
I would have done so: so I hope they have!
A fig-tree curled out of our cottage wall;
They called it mine, I have forgotten why,
It must have been there long ere I was born:
Cric—cric—I think I hear the wasps o'erhead
Pricking the papers strung to flutter there
And keep off birds in fruit-time—coarse long papers,
And the wasps eat them, prick them through and through.

3rd Girl. How her mouth twitches! Where was I?—
before
She broke in with her wishes and long gowns
And wasps—would I be such a fool!—Oh, here!
This is my way: I answer every one
Who asks me why I make so much of him—
(If you say, "you love him"—straight "he'll not be
gulled!")
"He that seduced me when I was a girl
"Thus high—had eyes like yours, or hair like yours,
"Brown, red, white,"—as the case may be: that pleases!
See how that beetle burnishes in the path!
There sparkles he along the dust: and, there—
Your journey to that maize-tuft spoiled at least!

1st Girl. When I was young, they said if you killed one
Of those sunshiny beetles, that his friend
Up there, would shine no more that day nor next.

2nd Girl. When you were young? Nor are you young,
that's true.
How your plump arms, that were, have dropped away!
Why, I can span them. Cecco beats you still?
No matter, so you keep your curious hair.
I wish they'd find a way to dye our hair
Your colour—any lighter tint, indeed,
Than black: the men say they are sick of black,
Black eyes, black hair!

4th Girl. Sick of yours, like enough.
Do you pretend you ever tasted lampreys
And ortolans? Giovita, of the palace,

Engaged (but there's no trusting him) to slice me
Polenta with a knife that had cut up
An ortolan.

2nd Girl. Why, there! Is not that Pippa
We are to talk to, under the window,—quick,—
Where the lights are?

1st Girl. That she? No, or she would sing.
For the Intendant said . .

3rd Girl. Oh, you sing first!
Then, if she listens and comes close . . I'll tell you,—
Sing that song the young English noble made,
Who took you for the purest of the pure,
And meant to leave the world for you—what fun!

2nd Girl. [*Sings.*]

You'll love me yet!—and I can tarry
Your love's protracted growing:
June reared that bunch of flowers you carry,
From seeds of April's sowing.

I plant a heartfull now: some seed
At least is sure to strike,
And yield—what you'll not pluck indeed,
Not love, but, may be, like.

You'll look at least on love's remains,
A grave's one violet:
Your look?—that pays a thousand pains.
What's death? You'll love me yet!

3rd Girl. [*To* PIPPA *who approaches.*] Oh you may come closer—we shall not eat you! Why, you seem the

very person that the great rich handsome Englishman has fallen so violently in love with. I'll tell you all about it.

IV.—NIGHT. *Inside the Palace by the Duomo.* MONSIGNOR, *dismissing his* Attendants.

Mon. Thanks, friends, many thanks! I chiefly desire life now, that I may recompense every one of you. Most I know something of already. What, a repast prepared? *Benedicto benedicatur* . . . ugh, ugh! Where was I? Oh, as you were remarking, Ugo, the weather is mild, very unlike winter-weather: but I am a Sicilian, you know, and shiver in your Julys here. To be sure, when 't was full summer at Messina, as we priests used to cross in procession the great square on Assumption Day, you might see our thickest yellow tapers twist suddenly in two, each like a falling star, or sink down on themselves in a gore of wax. But go, my friends, but go! [*To the* Intendant] Not you, Ugo! [*The others leave the apartment.*] I have long wanted to converse with you, Ugo.

Inten. Uguccio—

Mon. . . . 'guccio Stefani, man! of Ascoli, Fermo and Fossombruno;—what I do need instructing about, are these accounts of your administration of my poor brother's affairs. Ugh! I shall never get through a third part of your accounts: take some of these dainties before we attempt it, however. Are you bashful to that degree? For me, a crust and water suffice.

Inten. Do you choose this especial night to question me?

Mon. This night, Ugo. You have managed my late brother's affairs since the death of our elder brother: fourteen years and a month, all but three days. On the Third of December, I find him . . .

Inten. If you have so intimate an acquaintance with your brother's affairs, you will be tender of turning so far back: they will hardly bear looking into, so far back.

Mon. Ay, ay, ugh, ugh,—nothing but disappointments here below! I remark a considerable payment made to yourself on this Third of December. Talk of disappointments! There was a young fellow here, Jules, a foreign sculptor I did my utmost to advance, that the Church might be a gainer by us both: he was going on hopefully enough, and of a sudden he notifies to me some marvellous change that has happened in his notions of Art. Here's his letter,—"He never had a clearly conceived Ideal within his brain till to-day. Yet since his hand could manage a chisel, he has practised expressing other men's Ideals; and, in the very perfection he has attained to, he foresees an ultimate failure: his unconscious hand will pursue its prescribed course of old years, and will reproduce with a fatal expertness the ancient types, let the novel one appear never so palpably to his spirit. There is but one method of escape: confiding the virgin type to as chaste a hand, he will turn painter instead of sculptor, and paint, not carve, its characteristics,"—strike

out, I dare say, a school like Correggio: how think you, Ugo?

Inten. Is Correggio a painter?

Mon. Foolish Jules! and yet, after all, why foolish? He may—probably will, fail egregiously; but if there should arise a new painter, will it not be in some such way, by a poet now, or a musician, (spirits who have conceived and perfected an Ideal through some other channel) transferring it to this, and escaping our conventional roads by pure ignorance of them; eh, Ugo? If you have no appetite, talk at least, Ugo!

Inten. Sir, I can submit no longer to this course of yours. First, you select the group of which I formed one,—next you thin it gradually,—always retaining me with your smile,—and so do you proceed till you have fairly got me alone with you between four stone walls. And now then? Let this farce, this chatter end now: what is it you want with me?

Mon. Ugo!

Inten. From the instant you arrived, I felt your smile on me as you questioned me about this and the other article in those papers—why your brother should have given me this villa, that *podere*,—and your nod at the end meant,—what?

Mon. Possibly that I wished for no loud talk here. If once you set me coughing, Ugo!—

Inten. I have your brother's hand and seal to all I possess: now ask me what for! what service I did him—ask me!

Mon. I would better not: I should rip up old disgraces, let out my poor brother's weaknesses. By the way, Maffeo of Forli, (which, I forgot to observe, is your true name,) was the interdict ever taken off you, for robbing that church at Cesena?

Inten. No, nor needs be: for when I murdered your brother's friend, Pasquale, for him . . .

Mon. Ah, he employed you in that business, did he? Well, I must let you keep, as you say, this villa and that *podere*, for fear the world should find out my relations were of so indifferent a stamp? Maffeo, my family is the oldest in Messina, and century after century have my progenitors gone on polluting themselves with every wickedness under heaven: my own father . . . rest his soul!—I have, I know, a chapel to support that it may rest: my dear two dead brothers were,—what you know tolerably well; I, the youngest, might have rivalled them in vice, if not in wealth: but from my boyhood I came out from among them, and so am not partaker of their plagues. My glory springs from another source; or if from this, by contrast only,—for I, the bishop, am the brother of your employers, Ugo. I hope to repair some of their wrong, however; so far as my brother's ill-gotten treasure reverts to me, I can stop the consequences of his crime: and not one *soldo* shall escape me. Maffeo, the sword we quiet men spurn away, you shrewd knaves pick up and commit murders with; what opportunities the virtuous forego, the villanous seize. Because, to pleasure myself apart from other considerations, my food

would be millet-cake, my dress sackcloth and my couch straw,—am I therefore to let you, the off-scouring of the earth, seduce the poor and ignorant by appropriating a pomp these will be sure to think lessens the abominations so unaccountably and exclusively associated with it? Must I let villas and *poderi* go to you, a murderer and thief, that you may beget by means of them other murderers and thieves? No—if my cough would but allow me to speak!

Inten. What am I to expect? You are going to punish me?

Mon. —Must punish you, Maffeo. I cannot afford to cast away a chance. I have whole centuries of sin to redeem, and only a month or two of life to do it in. How should I dare to say . . .

Inten. "Forgive us our trespasses?"

Mon. My friend, it is because I avow myself a very worm, sinful beyond measure, that I reject a line of conduct you would applaud perhaps. Shall I proceed, as it were, a-pardoning?—I?—who have no symptom of reason to assume that aught less than my strenuousest efforts will keep myself out of mortal sin, much less keep others out. No: I do trespass, but will not double that by allowing you to trespass.

Inten. And suppose the villas are not your brother's to give, nor yours to take? Oh, you are hasty enough just now!

Mon. 1, 2—N° 3!—ay, can you read the substance of a letter, N° 3, I have received from Rome? It is precisely

on the ground there mentioned, of the suspicion I have that a certain child of my late elder brother, who would have succeeded to his estates, was murdered in infancy by you, Maffeo, at the instigation of my late brother—that the Pontiff enjoins on me not merely the bringing that Maffeo to condign punishment, but the taking all pains, as guardian of the infant's heritage for the Church, to recover it parcel by parcel, howsoever, whensoever and wheresoever. While you are now gnawing those fingers, the police are engaged in sealing up your papers, Maffeo, and the mere raising my voice brings my people from the next room to dispose of yourself. But I want you to confess quietly, and save me raising my voice. Why, man, do I not know the old story? The heir between the succeeding heir, and this heir's ruffianly instrument, and their complot's effect, and the life of fear and bribes and ominous smiling silence? Did you throttle or stab my brother's infant? Come now!

Inten. So old a story, and tell it no better? When did such an instrument ever produce such an effect? Either the child smiles in his face; or, most likely, he is not fool enough to put himself in the employer's power so thoroughly: the child is always ready to produce—as you say—howsoever, wheresoever and whensoever.

Mon. Liar!

Inten. Strike me? Ah, so might a father chastise! I shall sleep soundly to-night at least, though the gallows await me to-morrow; for what a life did I lead! Carlo

of Cesena reminds me of his connivance, every time I pay his annuity; which happens commonly thrice a year. If I remonstrate, he will confess all to the good bishop—you!

Mon. I see through the trick, caitiff! I would you spoke truth for once. All shall be sifted, however—seven times sifted.

Inten. And how my absurd riches encumbered me! I dared not lay claim to above half my possessions. Let me but once unbosom myself, glorify Heaven, and die!

Sir, you are no brutal dastardly idiot like your brother I frightened to death: let us understand one another. Sir, I will make away with her for you—the girl—here close at hand; not the stupid obvious kind of killing; do not speak—know nothing of her nor of me! I see her every day—saw her this morning: of course there is to be no killing; but at Rome the courtesans perish off every three years, and I can entice her thither—have indeed begun operations already. There's a certain lusty blue-eyed florid-complexioned English knave, I and the Police employ occasionally. You assent, I perceive—no, that's not it—assent I do not say—but you will let me convert my present havings and holdings into cash, and give me time to cross the Alps? 'Tis but a little black-eyed pretty singing Felippa, gay silk-winding girl. I have kept her out of harm's way up to this present; for I always intended to make your life a plague to you with her. 'T is as well settled once and for ever.

Some women I have procured will pass Bluphocks, my handsome scoundrel, off for somebody; and once Pippa entangled!—you conceive? Through her singing? Is it a bargain?

[*From without is heard the voice of* PIPPA, *singing*—

Overhead the tree-tops meet,
Flowers and grass spring 'neath one's feet;
There was nought above me, nought below,
My childhood had not learned to know:
For, what are the voices of birds
—Ay, and of beasts,—but words, our words,
Only so much more sweet?
The knowledge of that with my life begun.
But I had so near made out the sun,
And counted your stars, the seven and one,
Like the fingers of my hand:
Nay I could all but understand
Wherefore through heaven the white moon ranges;
And just when out of her soft fifty changes
No unfamiliar face might overlook me—
Suddenly God took me.

[PIPPA *passes.*

Mon. [*Springing up.*] My people—one and all—all—within there! Gag this villain—tie him hand and foot! He dares . . I know not half he dares—but remove him—quick! *Miserere mei, Domine!* Quick, I say!

PIPPA'S *Chamber again. She enters it.*

The bee with his comb,
The mouse at her dray,
The grub in its tomb,
Wile winter away;
But the fire-fly and hedge-shrew and lob-wörm, I pray,
How fare they?
Ha, ha, thanks for your counsel, my Zanze!
"Feast upon lampreys, quaff the Breganze"—
The summer of life so easy to spend,
And care for to-morrow so soon put away!
But winter hastens at summer's end,
And fire-fly, hedge-shrew, lob-worm, pray,
How fare they?
No bidding me then to . . what did Zanze say?
"Pare your nails pearlwise, get your small feet shoes
"More like" . . (what said she?)—"and less like canoes!"
How pert that girl was!—would I be those pert
Impudent staring women! It had done me,
However, surely no such mighty hurt
To learn his name who passed that jest upon me:
No foreigner, that I can recollect,
Came, as she says, a month since, to inspect
Our silk-mills—none with blue eyes and thick rings
Of raw-silk-coloured hair, at all events.
Well, if old Luca keep his good intents,
We shall do better, see what next year brings!
I may buy shoes, my Zanze, not appear

More destitute than you perhaps next year!
Bluph . . . something! I had caught the uncouth name
But for Monsignor's people's sudden clatter
Above us—bound to spoil such idle chatter
As ours: it were indeed a serious matter
If silly talk like ours should put to shame
The pious man, the man devoid of blame,
The . . . ah but—ah but, all the same,
No mere mortal has a right
To carry that exalted air;
Best people are not angels quite:
While—not the worst of people's doings scare
The devil; so there 's that proud look to spare!
Which is mere counsel to myself, mind! for
I have just been the holy Monsignor:
And I was you too, Luigi's gentle mother,
And you too, Luigi!—how that Luigi started
Out of the turret—doubtlessly departed
On some good errand or another,
For he passed just now in a traveller's trim,
And the sullen company that prowled
About his path, I noticed, scowled
As if they had lost a prey in him.
And I was Jules the sculptor's bride,
And I was Ottima beside,
And now what am I?—tired of fooling.
Day for folly, night for schooling!
New year's day is over and spent,
Ill or well, I must be content.

Even my lily 's asleep, I vow :
Wake up—here 's a friend I 've plucked you !
Call this flower a heart's-ease now !
Something rare, let me instruct you,
Is this, with petals triply swollen,
Three times spotted, thrice the pollen ;
While the leaves and parts that witness
Old proportions and their fitness,
Here remain unchanged, unmoved now ;
Call this pampered thing improved now !
Suppose there 's a king of the flowers
And a girl-show held in his bowers—
" Look ye, buds, this growth of ours,"
Says he, " Zanze from the Brenta,
" I have made her gorge polenta
" Till both cheeks are near as bouncing
" As her . . . name there 's no pronouncing !
" See this heightened colour too,
" For she swilled Breganzë wine
" Till her nose turned deep carmine ;
" 'T was but white when wild she grew.
" And only by this Zanze's eyes
" Of which we could not change the size,
" The magnitude of all achieved
" Otherwise, may be perceived."

Oh what a drear dark close to my poor day !
How could that red sun drop in that black cloud ?
Ah Pippa, morning's rule is moved away,

Dispensed with, never more to be allowed !
Day's turn is over, now arrives the night's.
Oh lark, be day's apostle
To mavis, merle and throstle,
Bid them their betters jostle
From day and its delights !
But at night, brother howlet, over the woods,
Toll the world to thy chantry ;
Sing to the bats' sleek sisterhoods
Full complines with gallantry :
Then, owls and bats, cowls and twats,
Monks and nuns, in a cloister's moods,
Adjourn to the oak-stump pantry !

[*After she has begun to undress herself.*

Now, one thing I should like to really know :
How near I ever might approach all these
I only fancied being, this long day :
—Approach, I mean, so as to touch them, so
As to . . in some way . . move them—if you please,
Do good or evil to them some slight way.
For instance, if I wind
Silk to-morrow, my silk may bind

[*Sitting on the bed-side.*

And border Ottima's cloak's hem.
Ah me, and my important part with them,
This morning's hymn half promised when I rose !
True in some sense or other, I suppose.

[*As she lies down.*

God bless me ! I can pray no more to-night.

No doubt, some way or other, hymns say right.
All service ranks the same with God—
With God, whose puppets, best and worst,
Are we: there is no last nor first.

[*She sleeps.*

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